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UMÉ SAN IN THE FIELD OF IRIS

LITTLE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE

UMÉ SAN IN JAPAN

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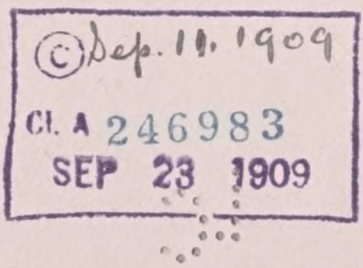

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PREFACE

Japan is a paradise of flowers and of treasure-flowers, as the Japanese mothers call their babies. In no other country in the world do they both form so large a part of the daily life of the people. From the first white plum blossom to the last gorgeous chrysanthemum the path of the days is strewn with beautiful blossoms; and from the time of the Dolls' Festival to the New Year's Celebration there is a constant round of simple pleasures for the children.

Happy children! who are always laughing and never crying; who are taught filial respect, reverence, and unquestioning obedience, but are surrounded in their homes with an atmosphere of kindness, cheerfulness and loving care.

It is true that the New Japan is very different from the Old. Railway trains and electric cars are taking the place of the jinrikisha and kago; modern school-houses, with desks, chairs, blackboards, and the latest methods of teaching are fast replacing the tiny school-room with its matted floors and its lessons learned by rote. But the spirit of the com-

mon people is unchanged. The children play the same games and listen to the same delightful tales; and their fathers and mothers hold to their old superstitions, their ancestor-worship and their love of nature.

This story is a picture of the simple life of a Japanese family. To follow little Umé San through the year, to play with her dolls on the days of the Dolls' Festival, to go with her to the parks to admire the cherry blossoms or chrysanthemums and join the crowds who are celebrating these joyous seasons, to feed the goldfishes and doves in the temple gardens, to buy toys and gifts in the streets of shops, and to welcome the New Year with festivity and merrymaking, is to catch a glimpse of the rare charm and spirit that pervade life in this "Land of the Rising Sun."

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UMÉ SAN IN JAPAN

CHAPTER I

LITTLE MISS PLUM BLOSSOM

The little plum tree in the garden had blossomed regularly every year for ten years on the twentieth day of the second month. That day was Plum Blossom's birthday.

On the day that she was born the little plum tree had blossomed for the first time. For that reason she was called Umé, which is the Japanese word for "plum blossom"; and for her sake the tree had opened its first blossoms on that same day for the next nine years.

Now, on the day before her eleventh birthday, all the buds were closed hard and fast. Umé looked at them just before going to bed and there seemed no chance of their opening for several days.

"Perhaps the weather will be fine to-morrow, Umé-ko," said her mother, as she spread a wadded quilt on the floor for her little daughter's bed. "If it is, and the sun shines honorably bright, the buds may open before the hour of sunset."

"I will say a prayer to Benten Sama that it may be so," answered Umé. Benten Sama is the Japanese goddess of good fortune, to whom the little girl prayed very often.

She knelt upon the mat and bent down until her forehead touched the floor, after the Japanese manner of making an honorable bow. She clapped her hands softly three times, and then rubbed one little pink palm against the other while she prayed.

"Dear Benten Sama," she said, "grant that just one little spray of the plum blossoms may open to-morrow."

For a moment she was very still, and then she added, "If they are open when I first wake in the morning, I will honorably practise on my koto for one whole hour after breakfast."

Then little Umé Utsuki slipped into her bed upon the floor, laid her head on the thin cushion of her wooden pillow, and drew the soft puff under her cunning Japanese chin.

"Good-night, dear Benten Sama," she whispered softly, and fell asleep with the words of an old Japanese song on her drowsy tongue: —

"Evening burning!
Little burning!
Weather, be fair to-morrow!"

The buds on the plum tree outside were closed

hard and fast, and the house walls about Umé were also tightly closed. The bright moon in the heavens could find no chink through which to send a cheering ray to little Umé San.

All through the night the frost sparkled on the bare twigs of the dwarf trees in the garden. All through the night the plum tree stood still and made no sign that Benten Sama had heard Umé's prayer. When the moonbeams grew pale in the morning light the buds were still tightly closed.

Umé stirred in her bed on the floor, crept softly to the screen in the wall and pushed it open. She moved the outer shutter also along its groove and stepped off the veranda without even stopping to put on her white stockings or her little wooden clogs.

Down the garden path to the plum tree she pattered as fast as her bare feet could carry her.

Alas, there was nothing to be seen on her plum tree but brown buds!

She looked up into the gray morning sky and tried to think of something else; but her gay little kimono covered a heart that was heavy with disappointment.

The tears tried to force their slow way into her eyes, but the little girl blinked them back again.

Umé's ten years had been spent in learning the hard lesson of bearing disappointments cheerfully.

Now, with the shadow of tears filling her eyes, she tried to bring the shadow of a smile to her tiny mouth.

"Benten Sama did not honorably please to open the buds," she whispered with a sob.

Then, standing on the frosty ground, with her bare toes numb from the cold, Umé made a rebellious little resolve deep in her heart where she thought Benten Sama would know nothing about it.

She resolved not to practise on her koto at all after breakfast.

There were two reasons for making the resolve so secretly. She might wish to pray to Benten Sama again some time, although if the goddess were not going to answer her prayers it did not seem at all likely; and besides, it was being very disobedient, because it was the rule that she must practise one-half hour every morning after breakfast.

Suddenly she realized that her disobedience would hurt her mother, who was not at all to blame because the plum tree had not blossomed; but just as her resolution began to weaken, her mother came out upon the veranda and called to her.

"The plum branch which your august father brought home only a week ago is full of blossoms," she said, as she led the child back into the house.

It was true. In a beautiful vase on the floor of

the honorable alcove stood a spray of white plum blossoms. Umé's mother pushed the sliding walls of the room wide open so that the morning sun might shine full upon the flowers.

The little girl ran across the matted floor and knelt joyously before them. "They are most honorably welcome!" she cried, and bent her forehead to the floor in salutation.

She forgot at once her disappointment in the garden and her resolve not to practise. She touched the sweet blossoms with loving fingers and called her brother to look at the beautiful things.

"Come Tara San! Come and look at the eldest brother of a hundred flowers!" she called.

Not only Tara, her brother, but Yuki, her baby sister, also came to bend over the blossoms in delight.

The spray stood in a brown jar filled with moist earth; here and there the brown color of the jar was flecked with drifts of white to represent the snow on bare earth, and the branch looked like a tiny tree growing out of the ground.

The plum is the first of all the trees to blossom in Japan, and for that reason it is called "eldest brother" to the flowers.

While the children touched the blossoms gently and chattered their delight, their mother was busy, waking the servants, sliding back all the wooden

shutters of the house, folding the bedding and putting it away in the closets.

Umé left her flower-gazing and sprang to her own puffs before her mother could touch them. "I will put them away," she said, and folded them carefully as she had been taught to do. After breakfast they would have to be taken out and aired; but the room must first be put in order for the morning meal.

Umé's bed was made, as are all Japanese beds, by spreading a quilted puff upon the floor. With another puff over her, and a wooden block on which to rest her head, the little girl slept as comfortably as most people sleep on mattresses and soft pillows.

Umé laughed softly now as she folded the puffs away in their closet. "There are still many things to make my birthday a happy one," she said to herself. "There will be a game with Cousin Tei after breakfast, and perhaps she will give me a gift." She said the last words in a whisper, so that her mother would not hear. No matter how much she might long for a gift, it was not becoming in her to speak of it beforehand.

She was sure that there would be gifts from her father and mother and from the respected grandmother. That was to be expected, and had even been hinted. The grandmother had mentioned an envelope of paper handkerchiefs the very day

before, after Umé had made an unusually graceful bow to her.

In her heart Umé wanted most a pair of little American shoes, but she had never dared to ask for them because her father did not like the dress of the American women. In fact, he often told Umé to observe carefully how much more graceful and attractive the kimono is than the strange clothing worn by the foreign people.

The little girl sighed as she remembered it. Just then she heard her father's step in the next room and turned quickly to bow before him.

The maids had brought several lacquered trays into the room, one for each member of the family, and had set them near together on the floor. Each tray had short legs, three or four inches high, and looked like a toy table. On the tray was placed a pair of chopsticks, a dainty china bowl and a tiny cup. Now one maid was beginning to fill the bowls with boiled rice and another was pouring tea into the cups.

All three children remained standing until the father entered the room. Then each one, even Baby San, bowed before him, kneeling on the floor and touching his forehead to the mat and saying, "Good morning, honorable Father."

To their mother the children bowed in the same way, and also to their grandmother when she came

into the room. Everything would have been most quiet and proper but for the baby. She liked to bump her little forehead on the floor so well that she kept on kotowing to old black Tama, the tailless cat, who stalked into the room. As if that were not enough, she bowed to each one of the breakfast trays until her mother seated her before one of them and gave her a pair of tiny chopsticks.

Then there was the waiting until the grandmother and the father and mother were served, which seemed to the baby to take too long a time. She beat the tray with her chopsticks and called for the rice-cakes even as they were disappearing down the honorable throat of her father.

Tara laughed. He was very fond of his little sister. That she should do such an unheard-of thing as to demand cakes from her father seemed to him exceedingly funny. His father smiled, too.

"Your grandmother will have a task to teach you what is proper, Yuki San," he said.

At last the breakfast of rice, tea and raw fish was over. The little lacquer trays were all taken out of the room, and the father was ready to go to his silk shop.

His jinrikisha was waiting at the garden gate. In their place on the flat stone at the house entrance stood his wooden clogs, and all the family gathered at the door to bid him "Sayonara."

CHAPTER II

UMÉ'S BIRTHDAY

Umé stood still, looking after her father until his jinrikisha was out of sight.

Down in her heart there was an uneasy feeling that she was going to do wrong. She had resolved to omit her koto practice, and having made such a resolve it seemed to her as binding as a promise. But now was the time she had always given to her practice; now, when her mother was busy with household cares.

"I will go first to cousin Tei's," she said to herself, and ran to her grandmother's room to find her mother.

"O Haha San," she said, "may I have your honorable permission to go to cousin Tei's house?"

"Yes, Daughter," answered her mother, and went on matching the silk pieces of the grandmother's new kimono.

Umé stepped down from the veranda into the garden path; then she stopped and looked back into the room where her koto lay. Something within her told her to go back. It was the strong

sense of obedience to duty which makes such a large part of the life of every Japanese girl.

She felt it so strongly that she took one step backward. Then the resolve made in the early morning, when she was disappointed at not seeing the plum blossoms, flashed into her memory. She slipped her feet into her wooden clogs, turned toward the garden and clattered swiftly down the path.

All the flowering shrubs were still wrapped in their winter kimonos of straw and it seemed to Umé that they knew about her disobedience. The cherry trees and the dwarf pine trees waved their branches backward toward the house.

She passed the little hill, the pond with its bridge, and the stone lantern, and she remembered that one day her father had told her that they all stood for obedience. But she ran forward, shaking her naughty little head as if to shake away every good influence.

At the farther end of the garden a tiny gateway led into her cousin Tei's garden, through which she ran to the house.

Tei was standing on the veranda bouncing a ball.

"Come, Tei," said Umé. "Let us go to the street of shops and buy some sweets. It is my birthday and I have ten sen."

Tei was so much in the habit of obeying that she

obeyed Umé, and the two little girls went into the city streets, where they found so many things to interest them that Umé quite forgot her koto practice.

It was not a common thing for the two children to wander away in this manner. They had so many playthings and so much room in the two gardens that they were quite contented to play together at home all day long after they had finished their house duties and the lessons at school were over.

To-day the children were to have a holiday; and while Umé's mother thought she was at Tei's house, Tei's mother thought her little daughter was at her cousin Umé's.

It was the middle of the afternoon before the two little girls returned home. They went first to the street of toy-shops and Umé bought a big red ball and a fairy-story book full of the most delightful pictures.

Then they sat down on the temple steps to look at the pictures, and would have read the story, too, but in a moment a man came down the street with a crowd of merry children following him. He stopped in front of Umé and quickly made five or six butterflies out of pieces of colored paper he took from his sleeve pocket.

The man blew the butterflies up into the air and kept them flying about by waving a big fan. At

last he made a beautiful yellow one light on Tei's hair.

"Keep it," said Umé, "it will bring good luck," and she gave the man a rin for it.

At one of the booths near the temple she bought two baked sweet potatoes and some rice-cakes, and the little girls ate their luncheon, holding the crumbs for the pigeons that flew down to eat from their outstretched hands.

Now the sen were all spent; but there were still many pleasant things for the two little girls to do. They ran down to the pond in the temple garden to look at the goldfish. Then they played a game with the new ball, and watched a group of boys playing marbles. They even played blind-man's-buff with some of the other children, and were really very happy.

Perhaps they would not have thought to go home at all if Umé had not remembered the tea-party in honor of her birthday. Her father was to come home from his shop earlier than usual, so that the family might drink tea together.

"Come, Tei," she said at last, "it is nearly the hour of tea-drinking. Let us go home."

Obedient Tei turned at once, saying only, "It would have been good to read the fairy story in the picture-book."

But Umé had not heard what Tei said. For the

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first time in many hours she was thinking of the koto practice.

"Did you ever do anything disobedient, Tei?" she asked.

Tei thought very hard for a few moments. "Yes," she said at last, "I once put the cherry blossoms into the chrysanthemum vase when the honorable mother told me not to do so."

Umé looked at Tei in surprise. "But how could you?" she asked. "They must have hurt your intelligent eyes after you put them there."

Tei shook her head. "I thought they looked pretty," she confessed.

Umé looked doubtful. After a moment she said, "I could never have put them in that vase; it would have looked wrong from the first. But I ran away from my koto practice to-day, perhaps that was just as bad."

It was Tei's turn to look surprised. "How could you do it?" she asked in horror. "All the gods will talk about you."

Umé shook her head. "It was not hard to do it," she said, "and it is true that I have not thought about it in this whole beautiful day. I do not understand why."

"It is because there have been so many other things to think about," said Tei; but she went home and told her mother that she thought Umé

would feel the displeasure of the gods because of her disobedience.

As for Umé, she said nothing about it at first. Her father was at home and the little girl slipped out of her clogs and into the room like a gay butterfly.

"I have returned, honorable Father," she said, fluttering to her knees and spreading her kimono sleeves as widely as they would go above her head. At the same time she bobbed the saucy little head upon a mat. Once would have been quite enough, but Umé did it several times.

"That will do," said her father at last.

He saw that the child was excited. Umé's grandmother saw it also and spoke reprovingly. "Little girls should never behave in a way to draw the honorable eyes of their parents upon them in displeasure," she said.

But Umé had discovered the tray of gifts standing on the floor. There were several packages, each neatly wrapped in white paper with a bit of writing on it, and tied with red and white paper ribbons.

Before she touched them Umé made a deep bow before her grandmother, saying, "Truly, thanks!" Then to her father she said, "O Chichi San, have I your generous permission to open the packages?"

The permission was given and happy little Umé

knelt on the floor beside the tray and opened one package after another. From every one she took first a tiny piece of dried fish wrapped in colored paper, which is nearly always given with a present in Japan.

"These are for good luck," she said, and placed the bits of fish carefully in a little lacquered box.

Of course there was the envelope of paper handkerchiefs from her grandmother. There was also a beautiful new kimono from her mother, and from her father there was a hairpin with white plum blossoms for ornament.

Tara gave her a doll dressed in a kimono like her own new one. "I kept it in the godown for a whole week of days," he told her.

"Yes," said the mother softly, "and it was not very hard to make such a small kimono secretly."

"I shall call her Haru," said Umé, "because she has come to me in the first days of the honorable springtime."

"On the day that I brought the hairpin home and hid it in your mother's sleeve," said her father with a smile, "I felt deeply deceitful."

Suddenly Umé felt very unhappy. She looked at all the loving faces and remembered that she, too, had this very day been most deceitful.

"Now let us look at Umé's plum tree," said the grandmother.

All the family rose from the floor and followed the good father into the garden. Yuki San toddled along on her wooden clogs, and behind the baby marched tailless Tama, keeping a sharp eye on the baby's hands. Tama did not like the feeling of those little hands.

They stopped under the plum tree and the father pointed to the branches. Umé looked, and the sight of the tree sent the blood into her face and then out of it. The buds all over the branches were shyly shaking out their white petals.

Umé heard her father say, "We must now write fitting poems and fasten them to the heavenly-blossoming branches." She saw all the family go back into the house for the brushes, ink and slips of paper, but she remained under the tree. She was too unhappy to make poems, and she felt sure that no thought of hers could be pleasing to the gods at this time.

"Benten Sama heard my prayer," she whispered; "and while I was disobedient, the plum tree has blossomed."

In a few moments her mother returned to the garden.

"Condescend to hear my unworthy poem," she said, and read it aloud from a slip of paper. "The illustrious sun called to the brown buds and the blossoms obeyed."

Umé hung her head. She only, it seemed, had been disobedient; even the buds had obeyed the call of the sun.

Just then Tara ran from the house. "My miserable poem is about the lovely sunset," he said, and read, "The joyful blossoms blush under the rosy glances of the sunset sky."

The father took the poems and fastened them to a branch of the tree. As he did so he looked down at his little daughter. "What unhappy thought clouds your face, Umé-ko?" he asked gently.

Umé began to cry. It was a long time since she had done such a thing. Little Japanese children are always taught not to permit their faces to show either grief or anger; but Umé's tears fell in spite of all her efforts to keep them back.

At the sight of her tears a silence fell upon the whole family. Even little Yuki looked at her in surprise as she told the story of her disobedience.

It was the grandmother who spoke first.

"Our spirits are poisoned that you have been so forgetful of our teaching," she said; "but I have learned many things in my long life. It is our honorable privilege to forgive your disobedience, if you are truly sorry for it, because this is your birthday."

Little Umé counted that forgiveness as the best of all her birthday gifts.

CHAPTER III

TEI BUYS A DOLL

"A whole year of months is a very long time, is it not, Umé?"

"Yes, Tei."

"Would you like to stay shut up in a dark room as long as that, the way the dolls do?"

"No indeed, Tei, and I would not stay shut up. I would find some way out and would run away."

"Just as we did on your birthday," said Tei.

"Oh, Tei, why did you speak of that? I had put that unworthy memory away in a dark place with all my other bad deeds and was never going to think of it again."

"Just as we put away the dolls in the godown after the Dolls' Festival is over, Umé?"

Umé laughed. "I had not thought of that, but it is so," she said.

All the time the two little girls were talking they were busily preparing breakfasts for their dolls. They had five or six small trays and on each one they placed chopsticks and bowls, and cups about as big as thimbles.

The room in which they were playing was the honorable guest room, the best one in the Utsuki

house. On one side of the room was a sight to make any little girl jump for joy. As many as five long shelves had been placed along the wall, arranged one above another like steps, and more than one hundred dolls were grouped on the shelves.

"Here are dolls of all honorable sizes! Ten sen for each, and all honorable prices!" chanted Umé, just as she had heard the toy-peddler cry.

There were indeed dolls of all sizes and kinds. There were big dolls and little dolls, boy dolls and girl dolls. Some were over a hundred years old, and others looked quite new.

On the top shelf stood five emperors with their empresses, and on the lowest shelf, among the toys, Haru was standing beside a new doll which Umé's mother had given her for this Dolls' Festival.

This festival, on the third day of the third month, is the most important one of the whole year to little Japanese girls. For nearly a week Umé and her mother had been busy preparing for this festival. They had set the shelves in place, covered them with gorgeous red cotton crêpe, and had then brought boxes and boxes and bags and bags of dolls and toys from the godown.

The godown is the fireproof building which may be seen in almost every Japanese garden. It is built of brick or stone, usually painted white, and has a black tiled roof and a heavy door which is

always shut and locked. If the family is a very wealthy one, with a great many treasures, the go-down must be large; if there are but few treasures the building may be smaller.

It is quite necessary to have some such place, which cannot easily be destroyed, because Japan is so often visited by earthquakes, and in the cities there are often terrible fires. Perhaps this explains why the Japanese have so little furniture and so few ornaments in their houses.

"I hope that there will not be a fire or an earthquake while the dolls are in the house," said Umé, standing off to see if there were a pair of chopsticks on each tray.

"How many dolls are there on the shelves?" asked Tei.

"I don't know," answered Umé. "There are all of mine and my mother's and my mother's mother's. And again there are some of her mother's mother's. And besides that there are some of her mother's mother's, and so on, and so on,— to the time of Confucius."

"That can't be quite true, Umé," said Tei, who was always very exact in her statements. "Confucius lived many hundred years ago, and I don't think there is a doll in all Japan as old as that."

"I said, 'and so on and so on,'" said Umé. "If you keep on you must get to Confucius some time."

She filled the little dishes with rice-cakes for the dolls' breakfasts while she talked, and Tei poured tea into the tiny cups.

"Oh, Umé, when your words once make an honorable beginning they always have trouble in finding an end."

"Oh, Tei, sometimes it might be well if your own words were sooner to find an honorable end."

Tei laughed and changed the subject. "I have heard," she said, "that there is a country where the little girls do not have a Dolls' Festival."

"Yes," answered Umé, "I also have heard as much, and that they sometimes give away their dolls when they are too old to play with them."

"Give them away! Give the dear dolls away!" cried Tei, fairly choking with horror.

"Yes, but perhaps they do not respect them as much as we do," said Umé, as she placed a breakfast tray before an emperor and empress on their throne.

"There must be some reason for it," said Tei. "Of course they cannot have a Dolls' Festival if they do not keep their dolls. But still there is no need to keep the dolls if they never have a festival."

The two children stood back and looked at the shelves. On the step below the emperors knelt the court musicians, some playing on the koto, some on the samisen, and others beating tiny drums.

There were also many court ladies, dressed in lovely silks and crêpes, their black hair fastened with jeweled hairpins.

"Are they not beautiful?" asked Tei, clasping her hands.

Umé looked tenderly at the lower shelves, where the more common dolls and toys were placed. "These are like the people we see every day, and I love them," she told Tei; "but when I look at the emperor dolls it makes me think of our own beloved Emperor, and I would give up all my toys for him."

"Yes," said Tei, "I would give my life for him."

At that moment she caught sight of a baby doll tied to the back of its nurse, and it reminded her of something very pleasant.

"I held my new baby brother in my arms this morning," she said.

"I am glad of the honorable baby," said Umé, "because now you are permitted to share the Festival of the Dolls with me."

"Yes," added Tei, "and I am also permitted to go to the shops to-day and buy a new doll. See all the sen the august father gave me this morning," and Tei took a handful of coins from her sleeve pocket.

Umé clapped her hands. "We will go as soon as all the dolls have had their breakfast," she said.

"I will strap Haru on my back, and you shall strap your new doll on your back, and we will play that they are truly babies."

She sprang to her feet as she said it, and danced up and down the room, clapping her hands and singing a queer little tune.

"I have the most honorably best time in the whole year when the Dolls' Festival comes," she cried.

It was not to be wondered at. Then all the dolls and toys and games that little girls love to play with are set out on the shelves in the honorable guest room; and for three days they have a holiday from school and play all the day long.

The doll-shops are always merry with children waiting to buy dolls and crowded with dolls waiting to be bought. But there were so many interesting things to see in the streets that Tei and Umé were a long time in reaching the doll-shop.

Once they stopped to watch the firemen who ran past them on their way to a fire.

The fire-stations in Tokio are tall ladders which are made to stand upright in the street, with a tub at the top in which the watchman sits. This tub looks like a crow's-nest on the mast of a vessel. Beside it is a big bell which the watchman strikes when he sees a fire anywhere.

The firemen run through the streets headed by a

man carrying a large paper standard, which they place near the burning house. They are very helpful in saving the women and children, but as they dislike to desert their standard they are not always of much use in putting out the fire.

House-owners give the firemen a great many presents to keep them faithful to their duty.

As the two little girls watched the men running to the fire with a little box of a hand-engine, and with the beautiful standard in the lead, they thought it a fine sight.

"Tara says he is going to be a fireman when he grows up," said Umé. "He says it is because a fireman gets so many presents."

Tei shook her head. "It is a sad thing when a fire burns a thousand houses as it did in our city last year," she said. "I do not like to think of it."

"We need have no fear," said Umé lightly. "Our fathers have extra houses packed away in their godowns."

"That is true," said Tei, "but many others are not so wisely fortunate."

Just then they reached the doll-shop and the fires were forgotten.

"Oh, the lovely dolls!" cried Umé clapping her hands.

There were a hundred bright kimono sleeves pushing and reaching toward the shelves of dolls in

the shop. There were fifty little Japanese girls chattering together about the smiling face of one and the beautiful silk kimono of another.

The click of wooden clogs, the clank of Japanese money, and the merry talk of the children, all trying to be heard at the same time, made it a jolly affair.

The doll chosen by Tei was the one which was being admired by two other little girls at the same moment. It was a boy baby with pink cheeks and black eyes and a little fringe of very black hair; and it was dressed in a lovely red silk kimono covered with yellow chrysanthemums.

"It is very like the new brother at home," said Tei, as she counted out the sen and gave them to the doll-shopman.

Then she strapped the doll on her back and the two little girls went home slowly, talking of the wonderful baby brother who had come to Tei's house the week before.

"The house has to be very quiet, because the honorable baby is not yet well," said Tei. "He has been very ill. I could not have gone with you to the city streets on your birthday if the baby had been well. Every one was glad to have me out of the house, so that it might be kept very still."

CHAPTER IV

THE DOLLS' FESTIVAL

When Umé and Tei reached home, carrying their dolls on their backs, they found Yuki on the veranda.

"My geta! Yuki's geta!" the baby called as soon as she saw her sister coming down the garden path; and she stood on one clog and held up the other little white-stockinged foot.

Small as she was, Yuki-ko could slip her feet into her wooden clogs without any help when she could find them; but Saké, the dog, generally found them first and as there was never a bone for him to hide, he liked to hide the tiny shoes.

Now, as usual, one of the clogs was missing from the flat step where the baby had last left it.

"Perhaps it is under the plum tree, O Yuki San," said Umé, and ran to find it, but it was not there.

"What a pity that Saké makes us so much trouble!" she said to Tei. "It is plain to be seen that the good dog Shiro was no ancestor of his."

"What good dog Shiro?" asked Tei.

"The dog of the man who made the dead trees

to blossom," answered Umé as she looked under the quince bushes; but the missing clog was not there. Several days later the gardener found it buried under the bush of snow blossoms; but Umé gave up looking for it when she did not find it in any of Saké's favorite places.

"It is such a long time since I heard the story of the good man who made trees blossom, that I have nearly forgotten it," said Tei; but Umé was talking to Yuki.

"Be happy, little treasure-flower," she said to the baby. "You shall have a new pair of clogs; and you may come with us now and help serve tea to the honorable dolls."

Baby Yuki forgot her clogs at once. She knelt upon the floor and held up her tiny hands for the tea-bowl.

"Oh, Umé! She is too little to whip the tea," said Tei when she saw that her cousin meant to give the baby a bowl of tea powder and a bamboo brush with which to whip it into foam.

"I will watch her," answered Umé. "It may be that the dolls forget all they learn about the tea-ceremony when they are shut up in the godown for a whole year. While I am teaching Yuki San, they may learn it all over again by most carefully watching us."

Tei laughed. "The illustrious dolls always be-

have most honorably well," she said. "Perhaps it is because they do not forget from year to year, but spend all their time in remembering."

Just then there was a happy little gurgle from the baby.

Umé turned quickly to see what she was doing. "O Yuki San! Yuki San!" she cried, running to the rescue.

But it was too late! While Umé had been talking with Tei, the baby had been pouring the tea over her head. She was still holding the bowl above her head when Umé looked, and the water was still trickling down over her hair and into her eyes.

She smiled sweetly up into Umé's face. "The honorable fountain!" she said.

"The Japanese tea-ceremony has nothing to do with the honorable fountain in the garden," said Umé as she clapped her hands for old Maru, the nurse.

"Naruhodo!" said old Maru, as she brought towels and wiped the tea from the baby and the mat with many exclamations of amazement.

"Naruhodo!" she repeated, as she watched the two older children try to teach something of the tea-ceremony to the baby.

But Yuki San was soon tired of sitting still. She like to watch the tea powder foam in the bowl, but

when she tried to put her tiny hands into the dish and play they were fishes, Umé gave her a doll and sent her off to play by herself.

"It will never do for the dolls to see such unworthy actions," Umé told Tei. "They will think it is all a part of the august tea-ceremony."

It was much easier to teach the dolls without the baby's help, and there was everything to teach them with. There was a toy kitchen with its charcoal brazier, its brushes and dishes. There was a toy work-box with thread, needles and silk.

There were toy quilts and wooden pillows and flower vases; and there were toy jinrikishas with their runners.

Umé and Tei taught the dolls the proper bowings for the street and those for the house. They changed the food on the trays, and taught the girl dolls that they must most carefully wait upon the boy dolls, as Umé herself had been taught to wait upon Tara, although she was older than her brother.

Umé even read aloud with much emphasis from the "Book of Learning for Women": "Let the children be always taught to speak the simple truth, to stand upright in their proper places, and to listen with respectful attention."

There are many other directions in the book, all of which the little women of Japan learn by heart.

Umé would have read many of the rules to the dolls, but her mother called both children to leave their play and go with the grandmother and old Maru to listen to story-telling in the street of theaters.

"It is a very different thing to tell the simple truth at one time and to listen to honorable stories at another," said Umé to the dolls as she left them.

In the street of theaters are many little booths in which there are men who tell the most enchanting stories. Sometimes they tell fairy stories, sometimes ghost stories, and sometimes stories of Japanese gods and heroes. Umé and Tei liked the fairy stories best of all.

"The old man in this booth tells fairy stories faithfully well," said the grandmother as they stopped before a tiny house decorated with paper parasols and lanterns, and with a long red banner floating above it from a bamboo pole.

"Honorably deign to enter," said a little woman crouching at the door.

Maru gave the woman four sen and the little party entered and joined a group of about twenty women and girls who were seated on mats in front of the story-teller.

"Hear, now, the story of the good old man who made dead trees to blossom!" said the story-teller, waving his fan over his head and then clapping it

in his hand three times to call attention to his words.

Umé and Tei looked at one another and clasped their hands beneath their chins.

"Just what we were respectfully speaking about in the morning hour!" murmured Tei.

Umé nodded and would have said something in answer, but her grandmother said "Hush!"

"Once upon a time two men lived side by side in a little village," said the story-teller, looking at Umé. Umé again nodded her head. She knew the story perfectly well, but the Japanese children love to hear the same stories told over and over again.

"One of these men was kind and generous," continued the story-teller. "The other was envious and cruel. Neither one of them had any children to pay them honor in their old age; but the kind man and his wife were always doing good. One day they found a dog which they took to their home and taught as they would have taught a child, to be obedient and faithful.

"They named the dog Shiro, and fed him with the mochi cake which tastes best after the New Year is made welcome with much joy and ceremony."

Umé and Tei nodded and smiled at one another.

"But Shiro knew nothing about the New Year

festival," went on the story-teller. "He was happy all the day long in following the good old man about and getting a kind pat from the gentle hand.

"One day he began digging for himself in a corner of the garden. Scratch! went his two paws as fast as he could make the dirt fly, and the good old man took his spade and dug in the spot to find what could be hidden in the dirt.

"He was rewarded by finding an honorable quantity of coins; enough to keep him and his wife comfortable for many months.

"But the envious man, the unworthy neighbor, hearing of this good fortune, asked to borrow the dog.

"'Yes, truly,' answered the other and sent Shiro home with his neighbor, although the obedient creature had always been driven away from the neighbor's gate with sticks and harsh words.

"'Now you must find treasure for me,' said the bad man who knew nothing about kindness to animals, for he pushed the poor dog's nose into the earth so deeply that Shiro was nearly smothered.

"The dog did truly begin scratching, but when the cruel man dug in that place, he found nothing but rubbish, which so enraged him that he killed the obedient animal and buried his body under a pine tree.

"At last the good man, wondering why Shiro

did not return, went to his neighbor and asked the reason. 'Ah, he was a bad dog!' answered the other. 'He would find nothing but rubbish in the ground for me, and so I killed him and he lies under the pine tree.'

"'It was a great pity to kill him,' said the good man. 'We should be kind to all animals, because it may be that the souls of our ancestors return and live in their bodies.'

"'What is done cannot now be helped,' the bad neighbor answered.

"So Shiro's master bought the tree, cut it down and took it home."

Umé and Tei nodded again. The mystery was to begin in the story and they drew closer to the grandmother.

"The spirit of the little dog spoke to his master in the night," said the story-teller, "and told him to make a tub from the pieces of the tree. It must be just such a tub as the mochi-makers use at New Year's time, and in the tub the old man must make mochi for Shiro.

"So the good old man did as he was bidden, thinking to put some of the cakes before the tablet on the god-shelf as an offering to the spirit of the obedient dog.

"But when he put the barley into the tub and began to pound it, the quantity of barley increased

until there was all that the man and his wife could use for their needs for a long time.

"This also, the envious neighbor saw, and he borrowed the tub as he had borrowed the dog, thinking to have as much barley meal for himself.

"But although the tub overflowed with the grain, it was all worthless; so poor that no one could eat it. A second time the man was angered and he pounded the tub to pieces in his rage.

"The patient old man gathered up the pieces and used them for fire-wood, saving the ashes as the spirit of Shiro directed him to do.

"In his garden there was an old dead tree. The spirit of the dog bade him sprinkle some of the ashes upon the branches of this tree and he obediently did so.

"Immediately, pop! The branches were suddenly covered with beautiful double cherry blossoms.

"People from far and wide flocked to see the sight, and among them was a prince who begged the old man to do the same thing for one of his trees which had long been dead.

"When his tree blossomed as the first had done, he was so pleased that he gave the old man many valuable gifts of silk and rice and sent him home, to be known as the 'old man who could make dead trees blossom.'"

When the story-teller finished, he disappeared be-

hind a red curtain and there was nothing for Umé and Tei to do but go home.

"It is a good thing that the story was no longer," said Umé, "because Tara is going to help me build a toy garden for my dolls."

Tara helped to build the garden, to be sure, but the two little girls waited upon him and listened to him, and not once forgot that in Japan girls and women must follow their brothers. They must never try to lead them.

"Go and get the spade from the garden-house, Umé," Tara said to his sister. "Bring some small stones from the rockery," he told Tei, and both little girls obeyed without a word.

At the end of the third day of the Dolls' Festival there was a charming toy garden at one end of the veranda. In the garden there was a tiny lake bordered with flowering shrubs, a little hill with trees growing around it, a path leading to the lake beside which grew peach trees in full bloom, and there were even two tiny stone lanterns and a little temple on the hill.

It had been a wonderful holiday for the little girls and they were sorry that it was all over, but they cheerfully helped to pack the dolls and toys away in boxes and carry them back to the godown.

CHAPTER V

A VISIT TO THE TEMPLE

"O Haha San," said Umé, "when we took little Yuki San to the temple for the first time, with whom did I sit in the jinrikisha?"

"It is not strange that you have no memory of it, little Plum Blossom," said her mother.

"Why, honorable mother?"

"Because you were ill from eating too many sweets the day before, and had to stay at home in your bed."

Umé laughed. "Now I do remember it," she said. "My unworthy head danced like a geisha girl when I tried to stand on my two feet."

Umé's mother looked at her little daughter reprovingly. "Do not speak so easily of such girls, Umé-ko," she said.

"Was Tara taken to the temple when he was thirty days old?"

"Yes, my daughter."

"But, Mother San, with whom did I ride then?"

"With O Ba San."

"I wish I could go to-day with Tei," said Umé.

Umé Riding in a Jinrikisha. *Page* 37.

"It is time for them even now to begin the journey," answered her mother. "You may perhaps ride in the same jinrikisha with your little cousin."

Umé made a deep bow to her mother, slipped into her clogs at the veranda step, and ran swiftly through the garden to her cousin's house.

Everything there was in a great state of excitement. The new baby, dressed in a most gorgeous red silk kimono with the family crest embroidered on the back and sleeves, was going to make his first visit to the temple.

"Yes, you may come with me," said Tei to Umé, after asking the honorable father's permission.

The pale little mother leaned back in her jinrikisha beside the nurse who carried the beautiful boy.

The father, very proud to have a son who would carry on the family name, rode in the first jinrikisha, and the little party took their way to the famous Kameido Temple in the eastern part of the city.

"It was not until three days ago that the baby was well enough to have his head shaved," Tei confided to Umé.

"But I thought it must always be done on the seventh day," said Umé.

Tei shook her head. "The august father commanded that it should not be done," she said. "The baby was so frail that there have been no visits

from anyone since he was first seen in our house."

"Then the baby might just as well have been a girl," said Umé decidedly.

"Oh no!" said Tei. "There have been dozens of presents of rice and silk, and many other things. And there have been letters of congratulation. And to-day, when we return from the temple, many, many people will come to see the baby, because they could not come before."

"What name was given to the baby on the seventh day?" asked Umé curiously.

"He is to be called Onda," answered Tei.

Before Umé could ask any more questions they had reached the temple.

Everything seemed to go wrong with Tei. She caught her clog as she was getting out of the jinrikisha and fell upon her nose. It bled a little, just enough to make her say pitifully, "Oh, how truly sad! It will never bring good luck to the dear brother."

But Umé was always quick at thinking of a way out of trouble. Near the entrance to the temple stood a deep basin filled with water. With this water everybody washes his hands before going in to pray. Umé lifted a spoonful of the water and rubbed it over her cousin's nose. "That will make it as well as ever," she told Tei.

"What is that in your other hand?" asked Tei,

seeing that Umé was using only one hand, and that the other was tightly closed.

"It is a rice-cake to feed to the goldfish in the temple lake." One can always buy rice-cakes at the temple gate, but Umé had thoughtfully brought one from her home.

Umé would have almost preferred feeding the fish to seeing the ceremony of placing the new baby under the protecting care of the patron saint of the temple. Baby Onda's father had chosen the God of Learning to be his son's patron saint. He wished to have the child become very studious and know thoroughly all the wisdom of Confucius and the old, old gods of learning and wisdom.

Before going into the temple everyone slipped out of his clogs, washed his hands, and made several bows at the entrance.

Tei's father then pulled a rope which rang a bell to attract the attention of the god. There was a moment when he clapped his hands together three times to be sure that the god was listening. After that he asked very earnestly that his little son might be carefully guarded and guided along the rough path of wisdom. Then he clapped his hands twice to show that his prayer was ended.

It was so solemn and impressive to little Umé that she forgot her rice-cake and let it drop to the temple floor as she clasped her own hands in prayer.

Then followed the gift to the gods, and one to the priest of the temple. The priest blessed the new baby and he was safely placed under the care of Sugawara-no-Michizanè, the God of Literature, in the Kameido Temple in the city of Tokio.

The ceremony was not very long. The moment it was over Umé and Tei stole as quickly as they could out of the temple, and ran down to the lake where the goldfish were waiting to be fed.

Of course they stayed there so long, feeding first one fish and then another, and watching them spread their fan-like tails and glide away to nibble the bits of rice-cake, that Tei's father came to look for them.

"We have no more time," he said gently to them. "Unless we are soon at our unworthy house, all the honorable guests will be there before us."

The jinrikisha runners were told to hurry home, and they obeyed so well that Umé and Tei clung to one another and gave little shrieks of delight.

Hardly had they reached home when the guests really did begin to arrive. All the relatives and friends came by ones and twos and threes; some in jinrikishas and some on foot,—all who had sent presents and all who had waited to bring them.

Umé and Tei counted the different pairs of clogs that were left at the veranda steps, and there were over one hundred pairs.

"Such an illustrious crowd!" said Tei, drawing in her breath with excitement.

But there was little time to count and look. The two children were needed to help pass tea and cakes to the visitors. It was dark before everybody was at last gone and the baby's first party was over.

"Baby Onda is tired with so much looking and holding and praising," said Umé to her mother as they went home through the gardens. "He will never go to sleep again, or else he will sleep for a week of days."

"He is an honorable boy child," answered her mother. "A boy must learn early to bear hardships."

"It is no hardship to receive honorable praise," said little Umé.

CHAPTER VI

CHERRY-BLOSSOM TIME

"The cherry trees in Ueno Park are in full blossom to-day," read Umé's father in the morning paper. "The Emperor visited the park yesterday to see the beautiful flowers."

Umé turned from looking at the cherry blossoms in the garden to look at her mother who stood on the veranda.

"Something will honorably give way in my heart, O Haha San," she said.

"What do you mean, Umé-ko?" asked her mother.

"My heart is greatly joyous over so many blossoms," answered the little girl. "It has grown so big that I would feel better if it should take itself to the godown and leave me without it."

"Foolish Umé!" said her mother, but she smiled at the child's fancy.

"The joy began to grow with the first pink buds," Umé went on, "and now that all the cherry trees everywhere are in blossom,—in our garden, in Tei's garden, and in all the gardens; along the

"The Cherry Trees in Ueno Park are in full Blossom.
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streets and river banks, and in all the parks, my heart is bursting with gladness."

"When hearts feel that way," said her mother, "it is because they wish to offer thanks to the gods. We will all go to the temple to-day and leave a gift, and then we will go to the beautiful Ueno Park, where there will be many others who feel the way that you do in their hearts."

"It is the way we Japanese always feel when the cherry trees hang out their pink garlands," said Umé's father.

Tara was bouncing a ball in the garden and heard this talk about the cherry blossoms.

"Wait until my festival," he said, "and then you will see what it is really like to feel gladness."

"Your festival," said Umé, "and pray what may your honorable festival be?"

"The fish-tree festival is the one I like," answered Tara, and he gave his ball a great toss into the air.

Umé looked puzzled for a moment, then she cried, "Oh, he means the Flag Festival!"

"Come, children," interrupted their mother, "find the lunch boxes and help to put all in peaceful readiness for our journey to the park."

Tara picked up Baby Yuki and gave her a toss into the air. In doing so he discovered that she had lost her name-label. It is a common thing for

a Japanese child to wear a wooden label tied around his neck, on which his name and address are printed. Then if he is lost he can be returned to his home.

Tara made a new label and tied it so firmly around the baby's neck that her tiny fingers could not possibly loosen the strings.

"Now, O Yuki San," he said, "you are all ready to go to the park, where you can get lost a dozen times if you wish, honorable Sister," and he gave her another toss for good luck.

In the meantime Umé found that her clog string was broken. "I may as well get a new string for each clog," she said. "When one breaks, I find that the other soon breaks also, for loneliness."

But there were no extra strings hanging in the clog-closet where some were usually to be found, and Umé had a great hunt for them.

Yuki San, and not Saké, was the thief this time. She had put them carefully away in one of the drawers of the writing cabinet the day before, when she was playing that her shoe was a doll-baby and must be tied to her back with its strings.

By the time they were all dressed in their finest clothes, three jinrikishas were waiting at the gate, and Tara rode off proudly with his father, while Baby San sat beside her mother, and Umé rode with her grandmother.

The streets were crowded with people dressed

in gay kimonos and carrying paper parasols or fans. Some were riding, some were walking, and all were happily chatting and laughing.

"Is everyone in the whole world going to Ueno Park?" Umé asked her grandmother, and immediately forgot her question in listening to the sounds of gongs and tinkling bells that filled the air. The joyous sound of bells is always a part of the Cherry-blossom Festival in Tokio, and makes the city a very merry place.

The long avenue leading up to the entrance of the park, which is on the brow of a high hill, was arched overhead with the blossoming branches of the cherry trees.

"The pink mist almost hides the blue sky," said Umé, "but the sunshine comes dancing through. See how gently it touches the pink petals with its rosy light!"

The little party rode through the park looking at the cherry trees and watching the crowds of people. Umé kept her poor grandmother's head bobbing to right and left as she spoke of one strange sight and then another.

First it was, "O Ba San, look at the Japanese baby in the American baby-carriage. It cannot be that he likes it as well as riding on his sister's back."

Next it was, "O Ba San, see the little foreign

children playing with the cake-woman's stove."

Umé would have liked to stop the jinrikisha man and watch the white-faced children as they made little batter cakes and fried them over the charcoal.

"We must not stop now," said her grandmother. "Your honorable father will tell us when we may stop."

Umé came as near pouting as a Japanese maiden can. "I think I have heard that the foreign children tell their fathers when they wish to stop in the honorable ride," she murmured.

"They are all barbarians, those foreigners," said her grandmother. "You can see by the gardens of flowers that they wear upon their heads, that they know nothing of propriety."

Umé, who had never worn a hat in her life, could say nothing to that. Every little foreign girl she saw was wearing a hat on her head on which there were many flowers of half a dozen different colors and kinds. Although it was a sight to hurt her eyes, Umé would have been glad to leave the jinrikisha and study the dresses of the little foreigners. Most of all she wished to join them in their play of cake-making.

"They must be glad to come to Japan and learn so many new ways to be happy, O Ba San," she said.

The grandmother did not quite understand Umé's

way of thinking. "In what way?" she asked.

"To ride among the beautiful cherry trees, with their delicious pink odors, in the beginning," said Umé. "I know that in no other country can the trees be so lovely and hold so many flowers."

As if her father knew that Umé longed to see something of the foreign children's play, he stopped his own jinrikisha man at that very moment, and the rest of his party stopped beside him.

Under a particularly large and beautiful cherry tree a group of both foreign and Japanese children were gathered around a peddler who carried a tray of candies upon his head. In one hand he held a drum and on his shoulder perched a monkey dressed in a bright colored kimono.

The man danced and sang a funny song about the troubles of Daruma, a snow man. Once in a while he beat the drum, and all the time he was jumping and twisting about until it seemed as if his tray of candies must surely fall off his head to the ground; but it never did.

When the monkey jumped from his master's shoulder and snatched off one of the boys' caps, putting it on his own head, all the people, big and little, screamed with joy.

By that time a great crowd of merrymakers had collected, and Umé's father told his coolie to go on. So the little party started on again, and soon passed

an open space among the trees where Japanese fireworks were shooting into the air. The Japanese send off their fireworks in the daytime, as well as at night, to make their festivals more festive.

The swish of the quick flight of a rocket into the air made every one look up. In a moment a big paper bird popped out of the rocket and came sailing slowly down to light on the top of one of the trees.

Then another rocket, and still another, was sent up, and from one came a golden dragon with a long red tongue and a still longer tail.

Umé's father dismissed all of the jinrikisha coolies, and after they had watched the fireworks a little while, the family went into a tea-house to eat their lunch and rest from the confusion.

As Tara looked out over the gaily dressed crowds he said boastfully, " There can be no other country in the world with such fine, brave people."

" It is true that we are a brave people," his father answered. " Many times, when I was no older than you are, little son, has my mother wakened me very early in the morning and put a toy sword into my hand. 'Your companions are out playing the sword-game. Join them!' were her words. And although the ground was white with snow, and I was very sleepy, I always went as she bade me."

Tara looked at his father in admiration.

" There has been much fighting with real swords

here in this very park," his father continued. "There was once a big battle under these cherry trees where you see nothing to-day but crowds of happy people with no thought of anything but enjoying the Cherry-blossom Festival."

"I shall not be perfectly happy until I have made cakes as the foreign children were doing," said Umé.

In the path outside the tea-house Umé had caught sight of a woman with a little charcoal fire in a copper brazier, which she thought her father might also see. The little old woman was neatly dressed, and carried over her right shoulder a bamboo pole from which hung the brazier, a griddle, some ladles and cake-turners. There was also a big blue and white jar of batter and a smaller one of sauce.

Umé's father beckoned to the woman, and to the children's joy she brought the things to the tea-house door, where Umé was allowed to make cakes for the whole family.

Baby San toddled up the steps with a cake for the grandmother. On the way she tumbled down and dropped it in the dirt. Then a fresh one had to be made and carried very carefully up the steps.

There were many children, with their fathers and mothers, coming and going past the tea-house. There were groups of students and parties of young ladies; there were jugglers and toy peddlers; and

over everything the cherry trees were scattering their falling petals.

There was a merry-go-round near the tea-house, and the crowds of people made it a gay place with their fun and frolic.

It was lucky that Baby Yuki had her tag around her neck. Once she slipped beyond her mother's watchful care and was only found after much questioning and searching.

When, at last, she was placed once more in her mother's arms, the grandmother said that it was time to go home.

" We have seen many cherry blossoms, and Umé's heart must be peacefully small once more," she said. " It is better to go home before we tire of so much merriment."

The jinrikisha men trotted all the way home, and the happy day was over all too soon.

CHAPTER VII

THE FLAG FESTIVAL

It was the fifth day of the fifth month, which is the day of the Flag Festival in Japan.

Tara slipped out of his wooden clogs and ran into the room where Umé was gathering her books together for school. "Baby Onda's fish is up at last," he shouted, "and as far as you can see the ocean of air is full of fishes. Did I not say that the fifth day of the fifth month would be filled with gladness?" he demanded.

"Yes, Tara, but I have far too much to do to talk with you now," said Umé very primly.

"At least you can condescend to come out on the veranda just one moment to look at cousin Onda's fish."

"Very well, honorable Brother," said Umé, and she followed him to the veranda.

Both children laughed aloud at the sight of the enormous paper carp flying from the top of the bamboo pole on their cousin's house. The fish was at least twenty feet long and was made of strong Japanese paper. Its great mouth and eyes were

wide open and it had swallowed so much air that it looked filled to bursting. A mighty wind blew it this way and that, up and down, making it look like a real fish that had been caught with a hook and was trying to escape.

"Onda's father is augustly proud because he has a son," said Umé. "He has found the biggest fish in all Tokio to fly, and the people will know that he has only a very little son."

"He will grow larger," said Tara loyally.

"And as he grows larger the fish will grow smaller," answered Umé. "Your own fish is only half as large as Onda's."

From a pole in the Utsuki house flew Tara's fish, while from poles as far as the eye could see flew fishes of all sizes and colors. Some poles held two, three, or even five or six fishes. There was a fish for every boy who lived in every house, and every fish was a carp, because in Japan the carp is the fish that can swim against the swift river currents and leap over waterfalls.

For the little Japanese girls there is the Dolls' Festival, and for the boys is this Flag Festival, when they stay at home from school and play all day long. They fly kites, spin tops, tell stories and are told tales of the brave heroes of Japan.

In the room where the dolls had sat in state for the girls there is now a shelf for the boys' toys.

There was a Fish for every Boy. *Page* 52.

There are many toy soldiers, figures of great heroes, men in armor, men wearing helmets and carrying swords, and some carrying guns or drawing tiny cannon on wheels. Tara had his soldiers arranged as if they were fighting a battle, and it was truly a most warlike scene.

The morning had been full of excitement. Tara had already observed the day by taking a bath in very hot water steeped with iris flowers. He had arranged his toys and soldiers. He had been to the kite-maker and bought a huge kite decorated with a picture of the sun in the brilliant red color which is dear to all Japanese children.

He had also run over in his mind the stories that he could remember of Japanese warriors of the past, for well he knew that before the day was over his mother would question him about them all.

He had also recited his catechism to Umé, and had answered bravely all the questions as she read them.

"What do you love best in the world?"

"The Emperor, of course."

"Better than your father and mother?"

"He is the father of my father and mother."

"What will you give the Emperor?"

"All my best toys, and my life when he needs it."

Now he was busy tying a long silk string to his kite and getting it ready to fly.

Umé forgot her school books and ran down the garden path to look once more at the bed of iris which was now in full bloom beside the brook.

"To-morrow I will gather some of the leaves and flowers," she said, "and arrange them in the tall green jar for the alcove. That will keep away evil spirits from our home."

Then she ran back to the house, making the motions of the flying fishes with her hands.

"If I were an honorable boy," she cried, "I would sail away from Japan to every country where there are dragons, and kill them all. Then I would come back home again and tell all about it, so that all the children and their children, as long as Japan lasts, would learn about me!"

Tara looked at Umé as contemptuously as a Japanese boy ever looks at his sister, which is not saying much, because in Japan the boys and girls are taught to be most polite to each other.

"That is not the way of a true patriot," he said. "We men must stay at home and defend our country from enemies that may attack us from without. True glory will find us; we do not need to run all over the world looking for it, and then perhaps, miss it after all."

"Well spoken, my son," said his father from

the veranda, where he had heard Tara's words. To Umé he said, " Our bravest men, the men who have given their lives for their country, and whose names will ever be spoken with reverence by our children's children, have died in the home-land."

He spoke solemnly, and Tara, who adored his father, moved close to his side as if to catch his brave spirit.

Umé also loved her father. She was grieved that he should speak to her in a tone of rebuke. She whirled about and fluttered to his other side, nestling under his arm and smiling the sweetest of smiles up into his face.

" Now I see, O Chichi San, why we fly the brave carp for our boys," she said prettily, " and why we steep the hardy iris flower in their bath water."

Her father looked down into her face. " You knew that very well before," he said with a smile. " You have heard of the wonderful strength of the carp ever since Tara was born. You know that every father who flies a paper carp for his son at this festival time does it with the hope that the boy will heed the sign and grow courageous and strong to overcome every obstacle."

But Umé still smiled up into her father's face. She felt that he was not yet quite pleased with her.

" Will you not come home early from the honorable business and tell us stories of the old war

heroes?" she asked softly. "The mother tells them faithfully well, leaving out no brave detail, but she has never fought, as you have done, for our beloved Emperor. It is you alone who can make us feel the joy of battle so that even I wish I could wear a sword and fight with it for our country."

Umé had conquered. Her father put his hand upon her head in loving consent. "When our women also are ready to give their lives for Japan," he said, "the country will never suffer defeat."

But Umé told her cousin Tei later in the day that one need not always fight to win a victory.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SINGING INSECTS

Umé sat on the edge of the veranda, taking coins from a little silk bag and spreading them out before her.

"Ichi, ni, san, shi, go," she counted, up to fourteen. "Fourteen sen," she said. "If I had one more I could buy the kind of singing insect I like best."

"What is that?" asked Tara.

"It is a kirigirisu."

"What shall you buy, then?" asked Tara.

"I shall have to buy a suzumushi, and two other honorably cheap ones," Umé told him.

"Ask the august father for one more sen," Tara advised.

But Umé shook her head. "The august father has given me all the sen he has for me this month," she answered.

"How do you know?"

"Because I have already asked for one more sen, and that was his honorable answer."

"I have one sen which you may have if you will let me call the kirigirisu partly mine," said Tara.

"I have a black cricket, a little grass lark, that I caught in our own garden last night, and it chirps so cheerfully that I do not need to buy any other singing insect."

"It does not matter whose insect it is," said Umé, "if it only sings."

So Tara gave his sen to Umé and she went to find Tei, who went with her down to the street of shops. There, among numberless other booths, the children found one where nothing but singing insects were for sale.

The insects were of different colors and sizes. Some were black, some were brown and some were bright green. The one that Umé chose looked much like a brown grasshopper.

"He sings most musically in the hours of darkness," said the insect merchant. "While you lie in your bed he will say to you, 'Tsuzuré — sasé, sasé, sasé.'"

Both little girls laughed at the words, which mean, "Torn clothes — patch up, patch up, patch up."

"They are strange words for the honorable insect-singer," said Tei.

Each insect was in a little cage which was made of horsehair or fine strands of bamboo. The cages were of different shapes and sizes for the different kinds of insects. Some were tall and shaped like a

bee-hive, some were oblong and others were square. Umé's kirigirisu was in a cage four inches long.

Tei also had a few sen. She looked at many insects carefully and finally chose a beautiful bright green grasshopper that made a sound like the weaving of a loom:—"Ji-i-i-i, chon-chon! Ji-i-i-i, chon-chon!"

Then home trotted the two little girls with their cunning cages.

It was a very warm day and the good mother was waiting for them with cups of cold tea. She looked at the insects and smiled at the baby who kotowed an honorable welcome to them.

"When I was a child," she said, "my unselfish mother told me a wise story about those same two insects."

Immediately the children seated themselves.

"We will be most respectfully quiet and listen, if you will tell it to us," said Umé.

"Long, long ago," began the mother, "when Japan was young, there were two faithful and obedient daughters who supported their blind old father by the labor of their hands. The elder girl spent all her days in weaving while the other was just as industriously sewing. In that way they took faithful care of their blind father for many years.

"Finally the old man died, and so deeply did the

two daughters mourn for him that soon they died also.

"One summer evening a strange sound was heard on their graves. It was a new sound that no one had ever heard there before, and it was made by two little insects which were swinging and singing on a blade of grass above the place where the two daughters lay.

"On the tomb of the elder was a pretty green insect, producing sounds like those made by a girl weaving,—'Ji-i-i-i, chon-chon! Ji-i-i-i, chon-chon!' This was the first weaver-insect. On the tomb of the younger sister was an insect which kept crying out,—'Tsuzuré — sasé, sasé! tsuzuré — sasé sasé, sasé!' ('Torn clothes — patch up, patch up! Torn clothes — patch up, patch up, patch up!') This was the first kirigirisu.

"Since that time these same little insects cry to every Japanese mother and daughter to work well before the cold winter days, to do all the weaving and sewing and mending and have the winter clothing ready.

"We used to believe that the spirits of the two girls took these shapes," she ended.

In the silence that followed the story, Tei's little insect sang, "Ji-i-i, chon-chon! Ji-i-i, chon-chon!" and Umé's answered, "Tsuzuré, sasé, sasé! Tsuzuré, sasé, sasé!"

The night was creeping over the garden. The sound of the temple bells rang through the air, and little flashes of light twinkled in unexpected places.

The children gathered closer to the mother and begged for one more story before bed-time.

"Did you ever hear of Princess Splendor?" she asked.

The children never had heard the story, and their mother told it to them.

"She was a beautiful little moon-child who came down to the world hundreds of years ago. There was but one way for her to come, and that was on a silver moonbeam.

"While she sat on a pine branch resting from her journey, a wood-cutter found her and took her to his home, where she stayed for many years.

"But the Emperor, passing through the forest, wondered why the little brown house of the wood-cutter shone with such a wonderful glow, and when he found that there was a beautiful moon-child there, he went to see her.

"By day or by night it was just the same with the house; it always shone with the glory of the Princess Splendor.

"Of course the Emperor wished to marry her; but he had been too late in finding her, because she was to return to her home in the moon at the

end of twenty years, and the end of the twenty years had come.

"She begged to stay with the Emperor and began to weep, but it was of no use. The moon-mother took her home and tried to comfort her; but her tears went on falling, and they take wings to themselves as fast as they fall. These fireflies are the golden tears of the lovely Princess Splendor."

It was quite dark when the story was finished, and Tei jumped up. "I must go home and show the intelligent insect to my honorable mother," she said.

"Tara and I will walk across the gardens with you," said Umé.

She reached under the veranda for three slender bamboo poles, while Tara ran for candles to put in the paper lanterns which hung on the end of the poles.

Soon the three lanterns went bobbing down the garden path through the dusk, and the sound of happy voices floated back to the mother.

"It was of no use!" said Umé's voice.

"What was of no use?" asked Tara.

"Princess Splendor could not marry the right prince," answered Umé.

The mother smiled, and rising, carried Yuki San into the house, while the temple bells were still ringing through the twilight.

CHAPTER IX

A TRIP TO KAMAKURA

It was a hot morning in midsummer. The veranda shutters had been open all night and the shoji had been only half closed so that tiny breezes might creep through to cool the pink cheek of Umé San, as she lay on the floor under a thin silk coverlet.

All night the kirigirisu had sung in his cage near Umé's bed; and all night the mosquitoes had buzzed and sung outside of Umé's own cage of green mosquito netting.

At four o'clock, just as the sun peeped into the room, Umé opened her eyes. "Oh, little kirigirisu," she whispered, "I like your singing much better than that of the mosquitoes. Gladly would I put them all in a cage in the godown."

Then she thought of her morning-glories and pattered out into the garden to look at them.

"How lovely they are," she said, as she touched them gently with her fingers. "This white one makes me think of Fujiyama when it is covered with snow; and this pink one is like the mountain at sunrise."

As she spoke, the little girl looked across the city

roofs to where her beloved mountain, Fujiyama, lifted its head like an inverted flower, tinged with the pink of the rising sun.

Just then her father came out to look at the morning-glories, too, and after the morning greetings, Umé told him her fancy about Fujiyama.

"Your thought is a poem, little daughter," said her father. "This very day you shall see the mountain in all its glory. Here we can see only its snow-capped crown, but on the way to Kamakura there are wonderful views of our sacred Fuji."

After breakfast there were great preparations for the journey to Kamakura. First, each one in the family, one after the other, had to take a hot bath. Then the best kimonos were put on, and the best paper parasols were taken out of a long box in the godown.

One servant ran to order the jinrikishas to take them to the station. Another packed rice, pickled radishes, and tiny strips of raw fish into the lunch boxes.

Umé's mother was in every part of the house at once, and even the grandmother seemed excited at the thought of going to the seashore.

Umé ran across the garden to tell Tei about the trip and bid her cousin sayonara, and Tara found a box of his best fishhooks and tucked them into his sleeve pocket.

"I may catch an eel," he said, "and then we can have it fried for our dinner."

At last the whole family were in the jinrikishas and were whirled so fast to the station that they had to wait a long time for the train.

The children were glad to stand on the platform, watching the throngs of people and seeing the interesting sights. Newsboys were running everywhere calling their papers; strangely-dressed foreigners were hiring jinrikisha-runners to take them over the city; a police sergeant was walking up and down; and electric cars were bringing passengers to the station with much ringing of bells and clanging of gongs.

"I fear Yuki-ko will not like her first ride in a train," said Umé, as the child hid her face in her mother's kimono at the sight of a big engine.

"I well remember my first sight of an engine," said the grandmother. "When I was a little girl there was not a railroad track in all Japan. When the first trains ran through the country, the peasant women thought the engines were horrible demons, and ran screaming away from the puffing and hissing."

"I, too, remember the first engines," said the father. "Many were the honorably strange sights that went with them. One morning a man took off his clogs at this admirable station and set them

with worthy care upon the platform before he entered the train. It was his peaceful expectation to find them waiting for him when he left the train in Yokohama."

At that moment an engine came puffing down the track, and soon they were all seated in one of the open cars and gliding swiftly out of the city.

The children pointed out to each other the lotus blossoms in the moats, the little boats in the canal and the freight boats on the Sumida river.

The father and mother talked about the tea-farms and the fields of rice and millet through which they were passing. Many crows flew cawing over the heads of men and women who were working in the deep mud of the rice fields.

"Pretty birds!" called Baby San.

"She means the white herons," said Tara. Dozens of the long-legged herons were stalking about in the muddy fields near the track; and farther away, many pieces of white paper fluttered from strings which were stretched across the fields of rice.

Yuki San saw no difference between the birds and the fluttering bits of white paper.

"Those small white ones scare the unworthy crows away, little flower Sister," explained Tara; but the baby sister shook her head and said, "No, pretty birds!"

Umé turned the baby's head gently away from

the fluttering scarecrows. "Look at the pretty flowers," she said.

Beautiful lotus blossoms were growing in the muddy ditches beside the track. The baby bobbed her head to them and begged them to stand still, but they all hurried past the hands she held out to them.

"The lotus is Buddha's flower," said O Ba San. "It grows out of the dirt and slime to give us blossoms of rare beauty. Such may be the growth of our hearts if we choke not their good impulses."

"It is a long way from Buddha's flower to his mountain," said Umé, as she looked off to where Fuji rose in the distance.

"Is it true," asked Tara, "that on the days when we cannot see the mountain through the mist, it is because it has gone on a visit to the gardens of the gods?"

"That is what I always thought when I was a child," his grandmother answered.

"And do many pilgrims every year climb the long way up its steep sides to the top?"

"Yes, my child."

"And must I also climb to the top some day, if I wish to please the gods?"

"Yes, unless the gods should honorably please to take away your power to climb."

"Oh," gasped Umé, "I hope the gods will never do that!"

She looked anxiously at her feet and said, "I hope they will never need my feet for anything. So unworthily short a time have I used them, that they cannot be fit for the gods."

"Let your use of them be always in the service of the gods, and the more honorably old they grow, the more favor will they find in the sight of the gods," answered her grandmother.

But Tara did not like such serious talk. "How does the earth get back on the mountain — the earth that the pilgrims bring down every day on their sandals?" he asked.

"It is said that it goes back of itself by night," his grandmother replied, and added, "but I would rather speak of the path of straw sandals which the pilgrims leave behind them as they toil up the rough sides of Fujiyama."

"Then what do they do?" asked Umé.

"They take many pairs with them, so that when one pair is worn out they may have others."

"But I thought the pilgrims were honorably poor," said Umé.

"Not always," said her grandmother. "And sandals cost but an insignificant sum. A pair may be bought for a few rin."

"Then I will go myself, some time," said Umé,

Fujiyama, the Sacred Mountain. *Page* 69.

as if the only reason she had never been to the mountain-top was because she had never known the price of sandals.

But before they could say anything more they were in Yokohama, where they were to leave the train and ride in jinrikishas to Kamakura.

After they had left this city, with its busy streets, its harbor dotted with boats and big foreign ships riding at anchor, the road led along a bluff from which there was a beautiful view of the bay.

It was intensely hot and the noonday sun beat fiercely down upon them. Umé held a big paper parasol carefully over her grandmother, and Tara and his father waved their fans slowly back and forth to catch the little breezes from the sea.

In the distance were green fields of rice, little vegetable farms, tiny houses, low blue hills, and beyond all, Fujiyama, rising majestically to the clear blue sky.

As they were whirled past a little village they heard a deep booming sound, and caught sight of an immense drum under an open shed, which was being beaten by two men.

"What is that?" asked Tara.

"Everywhere there has been no rain and the rice is drying in the fields," replied his father, "so drums are beaten and prayers are made to the gods that it may rain."

"Water is truly desirable," said Tara. "My unworthy throat is this moment as dry as the rice fields."

"Not far before us is a rocky pool shaded by ancient pines," said his father. "There pure august water will be given."

The rocky pool was a delightful resting-place. The stone basin was filled with water by a spring that leaped out of the heart of the cliff. The water overflowed the basin and formed a stream which ran along beside the road. Many travelers were sitting on low benches under the pines, the men smoking and the women and children chatting merrily.

Two women were washing clothes in the brook, and Tara and his sisters slipped off their sandals and white tabi, tucked up their kimonos and splashed about in the water.

The mother took the food from the lunch boxes, spread it on dainty paper napkins and called the children to come and eat.

"Truly thanks for this honorable food," said Umé, when she finished her luncheon. Then, as she looked up at the spring, she added, "The water which comes from the cliff sings a happy little song."

"It is like the spring of youth," said the grandmother.

"Deign honorably to tell the story of the spring

of youth," said the father, taking a pipe from his sleeve pocket and filling its tiny bowl.

"Long ago a poor wood-cutter lived in a hut in the forest with his old wife," said the grandmother. "Every day the old man went out to cut wood and the woman stayed at home weaving.

"One very hot day the old man wandered farther than usual, looking for wood, and he suddenly came to a little spring which he had never seen before. The water was clear and cool and he was very thirsty, so he knelt down and took a long drink. It was so good that he was about to take another — when he caught sight of his own face in the water.

"It was not his own old face. It was the face of a young man with black hair, smooth skin and bright eyes. He jumped up, and discovered that he no longer felt old. His arms were strong, his feet were nimble and he could run like a boy. He had found the Fountain of Youth and had been made young again.

"First he leaped up and shouted for joy; then he ran home faster than he had ever run before in his life. His wife did not know him and was frightened to see a stranger come running into the house. When he told her the wonder she could not at first believe him, but after a long time he convinced her that the young man she now saw

standing before her was really her old husband.

"Of course she wished to go at once to the spring of youth and become as young as her husband, so he told her where to find it in the forest and she set out, leaving him at home to wait for her return.

"She found the spring and knelt down to drink. The water was so cool and sweet that she drank and drank, and then drank again.

"The husband waited a long time at home for his wife to come back, changed into a pretty, slender girl. But she did not come back at all, and at last he became so anxious that he went into the forest to find her.

"He went as far as the spring, but she was nowhere to be seen. Just as he was about to go back home again he heard a little cry in the grass near the spring. Looking down he saw his wife's kimono and a baby,— a very small baby, not more than six months old.

"The old woman had drunk so much of the water that she had been carried back beyond the time of youth to that of infancy. The wood-cutter picked the baby up in his arms, and it looked up at him with a tiny smile. He carried it home, murmuring to it and thinking sad thoughts."

The story was finished and the jinrikishas were ready to take them on to Kamakura.

"Nothing can harm the Great Buddha." *Page* 73.

"I have heard so much about the wonderful Buddha that I do not wish to see anything else in Kamakura," said Umé, as they walked through the grounds of the long-vanished temple.

There was no need to tell the children to walk quietly and speak reverently before Buddha.

Umé looked up into the solemnly beautiful face, into the half-closed eyes that seemed to watch her through their eyelids of bronze, and knelt quietly in prayer.

"Nothing can harm the Great Buddha," said the father, after the prayers had been said and the offering given to the priest. "Six hundred and fifty years has he sat upon his throne. Once he was sheltered by a temple, but centuries ago a tidal wave, following an earthquake, swept away the walls and roof and left the mighty god still seated on his lotus-blossom throne."

As they turned to walk toward the village Umé said to her mother, "When I have heard the thunder I have always thought it was this Great Buddha, very angry about something. Now that I have seen his peaceful face I know it is not so."

"No," answered her mother. "Many thousands of girls and boys have seen Great Buddha's face as you saw it to-day. They have grown to be men and women, and their children have looked upon his face, but it is always calm and peaceful."

CHAPTER X

THE ISLAND OF SHELLS

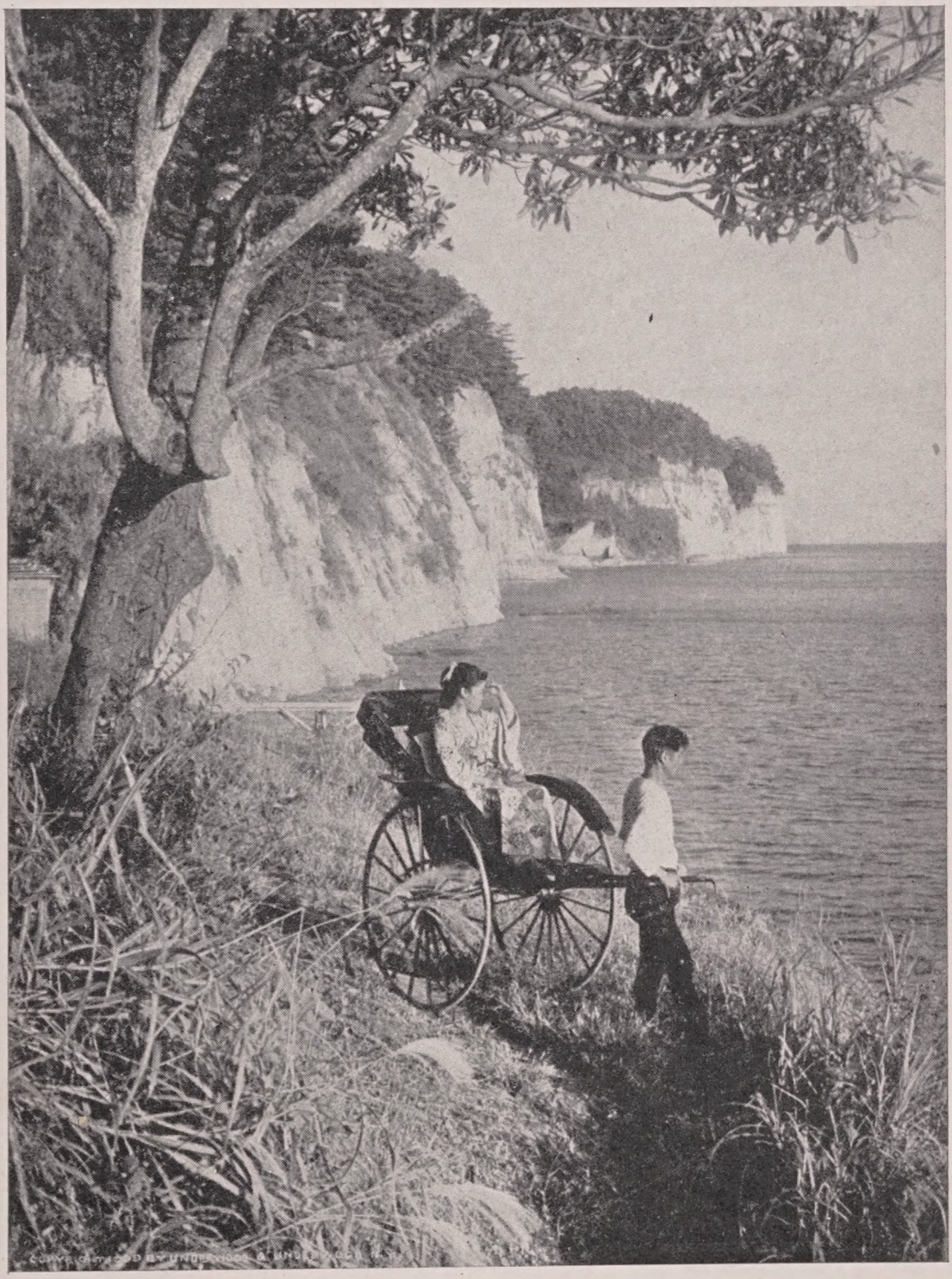
From Buddha's image at Kamakura to Enoshima, the island of shells, there is first a ride in jinrikishas through the low screen of hills that shuts the little village away from the sea; then there is a walk across the wet sands if the tide is out, or over a light wooden bridge if the waves wash over the path.

It was late in the afternoon when the jinrikisha-men trotted down from the hills through a deep-cut path to the shore, and Umé could hear the slow rollers breaking on the sands before she caught her first glimpse of the lovely green island.

The tide was coming in, but the water was still so shallow that the children were permitted to take off their sandals and tabi, and patter across the sands in their bare feet, while the older people walked slowly across the bridge.

The sands were strewn with lovely shells, left by the tide, and Baby Yuki soon had the sleeve pockets of her kimono filled full of pearly beauties that looked like peach blossoms.

Tara cared nothing for the shells. He spoke



"Umé caught her first Glimpse of the Lovely Green Island."
Page 74.

about the great tortoise which is said to live among the caves of the island, and of the bronze dragons which twisted around the gate through which they passed to enter the long climbing street of the town.

"I will ask the august father if we may visit the cave of the dragon," he said.

"Japan must have been full of dragons once," said Umé. "Who killed them all?"

"They turned into the honorable dragon-flies, to drive away the mosquitoes," answered Tara.

"There have been no dragons seen alive in Japan since the holy Buddha walked on the mountain," said his father.

"Tell us about it, please," begged Umé.

"Long ago," began the father, "as Shaka Sama, our most holy Buddha, walked on the mountain-top at eventime, he looked into the depths below and saw there the great dragon who knew the meaning of all things. Shaka Sama asked him many questions and to them all he received wise answers.

"Finally he asked the sacred question which he most wished to understand; but the dragon replied that, before revealing this last great mystery, he must first be fed for his endless hunger.

"Shaka Sama promised to give himself to the dragon after he should have been told this great truth. Then the dragon uttered the sacred mys-

tery and the god threw himself into the abyss as he had promised.

"But just as the fearful jaws were about to close over the holy man, the dragon was changed into a great eight-petaled lotus flower which held the Buddha up in its cup and bore him back to his place on the mountain."

"I thought there was a dragon in the cave at Enoshima to guard Benten Sama's temple," said Umé.

"There is no need of a dragon on the island," said her father. "The fisher boys who pray to her for good fortune make faithful guardians of her temple."

"Is it to help the fisher boys on sea, as well as unworthy little girls on land, that she has so many arms?" asked Umé.

But her father was leading the way along the rough street of the beautiful island, and did not answer.

Enoshima seems to be the home of all the shells in Japan. They lie heaped in all the houses and shops; shells as white and lustrous as moonlight, as rosy as dawn, as delicate as a baby's fingers. There are thousands and thousands of them piled together like the fallen petals of the pink cherry blossoms.

The street is lined on each side with tea-houses

and little shops, and in every one may be seen miracles of shell-work. There are strings of mother-of-pearl fishes, of mother-of-pearl birds, tiny kittens, and foxes and dogs. There are mother-of-pearl storks and beetles and butterflies, crabs and lobsters, and bees made of shell poised on the daintiest of shell flowers, and there are necklaces, pins and hairpins in a hundred shapes.

Baby Yuki went about with her head bent to one side, holding her ear to the mouth of the largest shells, wherever she could find them. Deep in their pink chambers she could hear the sound of the sea, and the dull roar pleased her. After listening to each one she would look up into her mother's face with a happy smile.

Their father bought ornaments for the children, a necklace of wee, shimmering, mother-of-pearl fishes for the baby, a tortoise of pearl-shell for which Tara begged, and a spray of shell flowers for Umé.

For Tara he bought also a glass cup blown double, with a tiny shell in the liquid between the glass. Of course it was soon broken and, after they had climbed the steep steps to the temples and prayed to Benten Sama in her own island home, they went back to the shops and bought another.

Afterwards they sat upon the rocks and watched the tide flow in from the sea. Over the water

skimmed the white sails of returning boats; the dragon's light, which we call phosphorescence, played at the edge of the waves, and there was no sound save that of the evening bells.

The twilight fell, making a gray sky in which rode a silver crescent.

"The Lady Moon," whispered Umé, and she joined her little hands, bent her head, and gave the prayer of welcome to O Tsuki Sama.

The father broke the stillness at last by telling the story of the famous warrior, Yoritomo, who made Kamakura a famous city hundreds of years ago.

"But Kamakura has been burned these many years," he said. "People come here now only to see Great Buddha and Enoshima."

"No," said Umé, "I came for something else. I came to ask Benten Sama for something which I very much wish."

"What is it?" asked Tara.

But Umé shut her lips together and shook her head that she would not tell.

"Were you afraid she would not hear you anywhere but in her own temple?" he asked again.

Umé nodded her head.

"I will surely find out what it was that you asked from her," said Tara mischievously.

Tara usually did find out Umé's little secrets in

some way, either by making fun or by teasing her.

"O Maru San has put an honorable stillness upon her august tongue," he would say with a laugh.

"O Maru San" means "Honorable Miss Round," and when Tara said it, Umé knew he was making fun of her.

Little Japanese girls and boys do not like to be ridiculed. So, when Tara spoke that way, it usually ended in Umé's saying, "Don't call me that name, Tara. My secret was only about the tea-party that Tei and I are going to have in the garden."

And soon Tara would know just what kind of cakes they were going to have; because in Japan the cakes are made to suit the season, if one wishes to have an elaborate party.

Then, although it says in the book of "The Greater Learning for Women," that at the age of seven, boys and girls must not sit on the same mat nor eat at the same table, Tara was often invited to Umé's tea-parties.

Now, although they stayed all night at the inn at Enoshima and there was plenty of time to find out Umé's secret, she did not tell it, and Tara finally concluded that it was something more important than a tea-party.

In the early morning they stood once more upon the seashore, to watch the sun rise out of the ocean.

The children forgot everything else in looking at the beautiful sight. "It is like our noble flag!" said Tara.

Japan is called "The Land of the Rising Sun," and the emblem of the country is a round red sun on a white ground.

The children long remembered the beauty of that morning. In front of them the great sun rose in a cloudless sky; behind them Fuji lifted his noble head, and the blue sea stretched on either side as far as they could see.

At last the father said, "We will return to Tokio, to-day. We have had a pleasant and honorable holiday."

"I wish first to find some of the intelligent crabs that make straight tracks by crawling sideways," said Tara. He had seen in the tea-house at Enoshima some wonderful crabs, and hoped to find one for himself.

"And I wish to buy return gifts for Tei and Baby Onda in the shops!" said Umé.

So while Tara hunted for crabs after breakfast, Umé and her mother hunted for gifts.

The little boy found no large crabs; neither did he find any good place to fish for eels, but Umé found a lovely pearly necklace for Tei, and a pink shell for Onda.

In her eagerness to reach home and show the

gifts, she gave little thought to the beautiful sights to be seen from the train.

She heard her grandmother say, "There are some fine young bamboo saplings. They would look well beside the gate-pine-tree at New Year time."

She heard Tara ask, "Why are they used in the gateway arch?" and her grandmother answered, "Because they stand for constancy and honesty."

"I will ask Benten Sama constantly for my wish to be fulfilled," said Umé to herself.

When they reached home, she ran at once to find Tei, but Tei had gone that very morning on a journey to Nikko.

CHAPTER XI

A DAY IN SCHOOL

What country is it that starts its children off to school very early in the morning? Japan, of course, the island kingdom, "The Land of the Rising Sun,"— and that is as it should be.

It was early in the "hour of the hare," as time would have been reckoned in the days of old Japan; but the American clock in the kitchen said half-past six, when Umé finished dressing for school.

She wore a plum-colored plaited skirt, with a blue kimono tucked inside, and she said to her mother, "May I now go to the honorable lesson-learn school, O Haha San?"

There was plenty of time between half-past six and seven o'clock for her to reach the school building and be in line with the other children when they greeted the teacher.

But all the other little girls were bending up and down in their greeting to the teacher when Umé at last slipped into her place among them. She said her happy "Ohayo!" just after the other lips were all closed upon the "good-morning."

She whispered to Tei as they slipped into their seats, "We must eat our unworthy lunches together. I have brought a bad piece of pickled radish for you. It was because I ran back to the dirty house for it that I was honorably late."

The Japanese people are all alike! When they mean one thing they say another. Umé really meant that their lunch was delicious; that her pickled radish was the best to be had in Tokio; and her house the sweetest and cleanest in the world; but it would have been very bad manners to say so; and to be late to school is not at all honorable in Japan.

But Japan is a country where the people do everything in an original way. The carpenter pulls his saw toward him when he saws, and the planer pulls his plane toward him when he planes a board. Everybody sits down to work, and the horse goes into the stall tail first.

The Japanese school children can never understand how the English children can make sense out of books that one reads from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page.

Umé's teacher read the lesson aloud and the children read it after her. They read from the bottom to the top of the page, from right to left, and from the end of the book to the beginning.

From seven until twelve o'clock the children were

busy with their lessons and recitations, stopping to eat their lunches in the middle of the forenoon, and for a short recess at the end of every hour.

Umé loved to go to school. Tara always said, "It is because I am obliged to, that I go to school," but Umé knew that her school-days were the happiest she would have for many years. After they were over, she would go to her husband's house and take the lowest place in his family, as is the custom of Japanese maidens.

Before that time she must learn to sew, cook and direct the servants in every household duty; she must also learn the tea-ceremony and the ceremony of flower arrangement.

All these things she learns, as well as reading, writing and music.

The tea-ceremony, which sounds so simple, is a very old and difficult one. Every position of the one who conducts it, as well as that of the bowl, spoon, tea-caddy and towel, is regulated by rule.

Bowls are used instead of teapots, and tea powder instead of tea leaves. There is a sweeping of the room at the right time, and a walking out into the garden at another right time. Oh, it is not so simple as it sounds!

The ceremony of arranging flowers is also very hard to learn. People who have learned it thoroughly are said to have charming dispositions as a

reward of merit. They are gentle, self-controlled, peaceful-hearted and always at ease in the presence of their superiors, besides having many other virtues.

Umé enjoyed it all. Everything she did was prettily and gracefully done. Whether she bent over a difficult, unruly spray of blossoms, or over her writing brush to make the difficult characters, her sweet oval face was never clouded.

After the writing lesson was over on this opening day, she took her copy book, which was soggy with much India ink and water, and beckoned Tei to take hers also into the yard. There they spread the books in the sun to dry.

Tei's family had been away for a month for the sake of Baby Onda's health, and the two little girls had not seen each other until now.

"What did you see at Nikko?" asked Umé.

"We saw the most beautiful building in Japan; the tomb of the great Iyeyasu," answered Tei.

"I also was at Nikko and played with Tei in the temple yard," said a third child who overheard their talk.

The three little girls walked back to the schoolroom together and Umé said, "I have asked my mother to take me to Nikko some time."

"There are beautiful temples there," said Tei. "The mad pony of the illustrious Iyeyasu is there

in a stable which has wonderful carvings over the doorway. It was there we saw the three monkeys your honorable mother spoke about one day."

Umé drew her breath in a long sigh. "I have always wished to see those monkeys," she said.

"After you have seen them," said Tei, "you will never again wish to see evil, hear evil, nor speak evil."

The little girls drew away from one another and fell into the three positions. They made a cunning picture as they stood, Umé with her fingers over her ears, Tei with her mouth covered, and the third little girl covering her eyes.

The teacher stood in the doorway and smiled — "The little dumb monkey, the little deaf monkey, and the monkey that will not see any evil!" he said.

The three little monkeys bowed to the ground and ran laughing for their lunch boxes.

"What do you think Tara is doing in his school this minute?" asked Tei, as they began eating rice-cakes.

"He is perhaps having military drill," said Umé. "Or he maybe is hearing about Iyeyasu; that when he went into battle he wore a handkerchief over his head, but after the victory he put on his helmet."

Tei sighed. "I wish there were not so many

things to learn about our great heroes," she said.

Umé laughed. "Let not the honorable teacher hear you say such a thing," she said, "else we shall have another history book given us, with the example of brave and loyal Japanese women to read in it."

No country in the world has so many books of history for the children to learn as Japan. It was not strange that Tei sometimes found it wearisome. There was all the history of Old Japan to be learned, as well as all about the New Japan, and even Umé was never sorry when the noon hour arrived and they were dismissed from school.

They bowed low to the teacher, and the teacher bowed low to them, and they clattered toward home with a great chattering of soft voices.

But the voices were all hushed when Umé told her playmates that she had visited Benten-Sama's temple at Enoshima in the time of great heat.

"Oh, Umé! what favor did you ask of the dear goddess?" asked Tei.

Umé shook her head, as she had done when Tara asked her the same question.

"I will wait and see if she grants it to me before I tell it to any one," she said, and opened her pretty paper parasol.

CHAPTER XII

YUKI SAN IN THE STREET OF SHOPS

Asakusa Temple and its beautiful grounds are in the eastern part of the city of Tokio.

Jinrikisha runners could cover the distance between the Utsuki house and Asakusa Temple in fifteen or twenty minutes, but Baby Yuki was two hours on the way, because she toddled along so slowly and stopped so often to watch the children who were playing in the streets.

The baby slipped quietly out of the house while her mother was having her honorable hair dressed. It takes a hair-dresser about two hours to dress a Japanese lady's honorable hair, but fortunately it has to be done only once in five or six days because the hair is never mussed at night.

The women in Japan keep their heads peacefully quiet all night, letting their necks only rest upon the thin cushion of their wooden pillow. In this way the soft rolls and puffs of their shining black hair are not disturbed, and even the big pins do not have to be removed.

Hair-dressers go from house to house as often

as they are needed, and when Baby Yuki saw one come into the room and begin taking down her mother's hair, she began quietly taking her way along the stepping stones to the gate. Once outside the gate she trotted along toward the bridge over the moat.

This moat ran around the old feudal castle where a daimyo used to live, and Yuki-ko often went as far as the bridge with Umé or Tara when they started off for school. Sometimes all three of the children went there to look at the green lotus leaves or the beautiful lotus blossoms which cover the water in July and August.

But to-day Baby Yuki did not stop on the bridge. She crossed it and clattered down the street to a far corner where a street-peddler was selling toys.

Japanese peddlers are always very pleasant people, and this one danced and sang funny songs which the baby was only too glad to hear.

Up one street and down another the man took his way, stopping wherever he found a few little children to listen to him; and one or two children from every group followed along with Yuki San, making a pretty sight.

A foreign lady with a camera stopped her jinrikisha-man, saying, "That is the very smallest child I ever saw standing on its own two feet and walking with other children in the street. One of the

older girls should carry the baby on her back."

Baby Yuki stood on the outside of the group, making a pretty picture all by herself. She was so clean and sweet that the lady determined to follow her and take several pictures. She dismissed her jinrikisha and became a child with the others, following where the peddler led.

At last they reached Asakusa street, which leads to Asakusa Temple. This street is lined with booths on each side, and in each booth there is a man selling toys, or candies, or paper parasols, or kites, or something to tempt the rin and sen out of a child's pocket.

Wherever there is a temple in a Japanese city there is also a toy-shop, and where there is a toy-shop there is, of course, a toy which one must surely buy. The children love to buy the toys and play with them in the temple gardens.

In the gardens of Asakusa Temple there are ponds filled with goldfish and silverfish and carp. These fish are tame and will eat from the children's fingers because children have fed them for years and years.

Just outside the gateway to the temple, old women sit beside little tables and sell saucers full of food for the fishes in the ponds and the doves that live in the temple eaves. And where one person sells anything many other people also sell some-

The Street of Shops and Asakusa Temple. *Page* 91.

thing. They sell, the children buy, and the doves and fishes are fed.

"It is like the 'House that Jack Built,'" said the American lady. "This is the pond that held the fish, that ate the cakes, that lay in the dish and were sold in the booths with all kinds of toys, from dolls to kites, for girls and boys."

It does not take the little street of shops a long time to reach the temple steps, in Asakusa; but it does take the little people a long time to get through the street.

Baby Yuki stopped to kotow to the first old woman she saw selling beans. In that moment the toy-peddler and all the children seemed to disappear. The baby looked around for them, and was frightened to find that she was all alone.

But before she had time to realize that she was lost, the foreign lady had bought beans from the old woman and poured them into the baby's hands, and the doves were flying down to pick up the beans as she scattered them in the street.

From feeding the doves it was but a step to other joys. The lady bought a paper parasol at one of the booths, at another a doll and a Japanese lantern on the end of a slender bamboo stick. She tied the doll to the baby's back, tilted the parasol over her shoulder, gave her the lantern to hold, and took her picture.

Then she took the child's hand and they walked along together until they came to an old woman who sat on the ground holding a tray of paper flowers.

The lady stopped to buy some of the flowers, and might have gone on buying gifts — for there was no end to the toys for sale in that short street — but the paper flowers had to be opened in a bowl of water.

To find the bowl of water the big lady and the little girl had to pass under the temple gate and walk off among the trees and fish-ponds till they came to a tea-house. There they sat down to rest, and a maid brought tea and cakes for them to eat, and a bowl of water for the flowers.

There are always picnics going on in the grounds of the temple, especially at chrysanthemum time; but there was never a prettier picnic sight than the one made by Yuki-ko San and her foreign friend as they knelt on the mats, sipping their tea, and watching the tiny paper flowers change into all sorts of shapes.

Some of the flowers became beautiful potted plants, about an inch tall. Others changed into trees, or birds, and one even took the shape of Fu-jiyama, the lofty mountain. They seemed like fairy trees and birds, and not until the last one had opened did Yuki San lift her little face from the

bowl of water. Then she spoke for the first time. "Yuki take little birds home to O Chichi San," she said.

"Mercy! the child is lost and I don't know how to find her people," said the foreign lady. But the maid who served the cakes said, "She must have a name-label around her neck."

Fortunately she had, and not only the street where she lived, but also the street and number of her father's shop, was written on it.

It was so far to either place that the lady said very sensibly, "We will take a carriage." So she called a jinrikisha-man, and off they went to the father's shop.

At a little distance from the silk shop, where the father sat waiting for customers, the lady stopped her runner and put the little girl down upon the ground. "Run to your O Chichi San," she said, pointing to the shop, and then she watched the baby to see if she found the right father.

In the meantime someone else was hurrying to find her father. It was Umé, who had been sent with one of the maids to tell the sad news that Baby Yuki had wandered away from home and was surely lost.

Just as Umé reached the silk shop and poured out her story, who should toddle along with her hands full of toys, dropping one and then another as

she kotowed her fat little body over them, but the baby herself.

Of course there was much talk, and many questions were asked of her; but the child could only say that "Haha San with many hands" had given her the toys and brought her to her father.

"It was Benten Sama," said Umé.

It is well known that Benten Sama has eight hands, and who but Benten Sama would give Baby Yuki so many lovely gifts and bring her safely through the city streets to her father's shop?

As they took the baby home to her frightened mother, Umé said softly to her father, "Yuki-ko San did as much in finding you as Fishsave did when he found his father."

And her father answered, "The tie between fathers and children is honorably strong."

But Umé was already thinking that probably Benten Sama would answer her payer.

As they passed the foreign lady, who was still sitting in her jinrikisha at the corner of the street, Umé looked longingly at the tan-colored shoes she was wearing.

"Red ones with black heels are prettier," she said to herself.

CHAPTER XIII

THE EMPEROR'S BIRTHDAY

"Let the Emperor live forever!" sang Umé, on the third day of the eleventh month.

This day is the Emperor's birthday, and all loyal Japanese pray that their ruler may see the chrysanthemum cup go round, autumn after autumn, for a thousand years.

Autumn is the loveliest month of all the year in Japan. Then the maples put on their glorious crimson and orange colors, and the chrysanthemums fling out their beautiful many-colored petals to the sun.

The Japanese say that the maples are the crimson clouds that hang about the sunset of their flower life.

From February until November different flowers reign, one after another, for a few short weeks. First comes the plum blossom, about which everyone writes a poem. Next the great double cherry blossoms make the island look like a lovely pink cobweb on the blue sea. After that, wistaria blossoms, five or six feet long, hang from trellises and

flutter in the breeze; and so on, until at last the chrysanthemum, the royal flower, says "Sayonara," and the sun of the flower-year has set.

"The last flower is honorably the best," said Umé, as she hovered over the masses of color in the garden-beds.

She looked like a beautiful blossom herself in her blue silk kimono. Chrysanthemums in deep golden brown and palest pink were embroidered in the silk. Her undergarment of pink showed at the throat; and about her waist was a pink sash embroidered with blue.

That sash was Umé's delight. It was tied in an immense bow behind, and Tara had never been able to find the ends that he might pull them out and so tease his sister a little.

On her feet Umé wore black lacquer clogs and white stockings, with the great toe in a room by itself.

Her hair was carefully drawn up to the top of her head, where it was tied with a broad piece of blue crêpe, and then formed into several puffs at the back. A brilliant pink chrysanthemum pin was stuck through the puffs in one direction and a butterfly pin in the other.

Umé's pins and sashes were her dearest treasures!

The finishing touch was given to her face and

lips. Rice powder made her skin look very white, and a touch of paint made her cheeks and mouth very red, although they were quite red enough before.

Her mother was wholly pleased with Umé's appearance, but Umé shook her head over the clogs; she wished for something different.

"It is time to make the honorable start to the gardens, Umé-ko!" called her mother at last, and the little girl left the flowers and took her seat in the waiting jinrikisha.

Umé was going with her mother, first to make an offering at the temple, then to look at the flowers in the gardens at Dango-Zaka.

Tara was going with his father to see the Emperor review the troops.

Yuki San was not forgotten. She was going with her grandmother to play in the gardens at Asakusa once more.

All wore their festival clothes, as was proper on the Emperor's birthday.

Tara and his father wore kimonos, but they were much darker in color than Umé's; their sashes were narrower, and there were no bows in the back.

Yuki-ko was the really gorgeous one. Her kimono was of bright red silk, her sash pale yellow. A gold embroidered pocket hung from the sash and in the pocket she carried a charm to keep her safe

from harm in case something happened to her name-label.

The " honorable start " was made at last and the three jinrikisha coolies dashed through the gate, one behind the other, Tara and his father in the lead.

A fuzzy caterpillar was humping his way along the road outside the gate. The three runners turned aside and left a large part of the road to the caterpillar, although so much room was more than the fuzzy creature needed. The men thought that perhaps the soul of an ancestor might be in the little insect, and they feared to crush it.

The city was in its gayest holiday attire. Red and white Japanese flags adorned every house. Men dressed in uniform were hurrying through the streets, soldiers were marching toward the parade grounds, and there were crowds of happy people everywhere.

After riding over the wooden bridge Tara and his father took their way to the Emperor's review, while the other two jinrikishas turned toward Asakusa Temple.

Umé sat up very straight, making herself as tall as possible, and said, as she watched her father being whirled down the street, " My son, it is now my unworthy privilege —" then stopped, because her mother looked at her in reproof.

"It is my unworthy privilege to remind you that respectful children do not thus mimic their parents in voice and word," said her mother gravely.

"I will ask to be forgiven when we are in the temple," said Umé penitently.

She was still serious when she dropped a rin into the grated box that waits always for offerings in the temples.

"May I write a prayer to the goddess Kwannon?" she asked, as the coin clinked against others in the box.

"Is there something you very much desire, Umé-ko?" asked her mother with a smile.

Umé nodded. "There is something I have asked from every one of the gods and goddesses you have ever told me about," she said. "I have been asking for it constantly ever since my last plum-blossom birthday."

"Kwannon is the goddess of mercy; perhaps she will be merciful to you and grant your wish, whatever it may be," said her mother.

So Umé wrote her wish on a slip of paper and hung it where hundreds of other prayers were hanging on a lattice in front of a shrine.

Afterwards she went with her mother to the corner where the god Binzuru was waiting to cure any sort of disease.

Umé's mother had an ache in her back. She

rubbed her hand gently over the back of the god and then tried to rub her own back; but it was not easy to reach between her shoulders and rub the pain away. After she finished reaching, her back ached more than before.

"We will go to the gardens at Dango-Zaka; there we shall forget our aches in looking at the lovely flowers," she told Umé.

Baby Yuki was already feeding the goldfish and did not care whether her mother stayed at Asakusa Temple or not.

So the two rode away through the city streets toward the district of Dango-Zaka. Sometimes they mounted a hill from which they could look over the city and see the flags fluttering in the breeze; sometimes they crossed a canal crowded with heavily-laden scows; sometimes they passed through business streets where people sat in their houses or shops with the front walls all open to the sidewalk. The people sat and worked, or ate their lunch, or sold their wares, as if they were all a part of one great family with the people in the streets and had no secrets from them.

Wells and water-tanks stood at convenient distances along the streets, and from their jinriki-shas Umé and her mother saw crowds of women washing rice and chatting with one another as they worked.

At the chrysanthemum gardens there were many little gates, at each one of which Umé paid four sen before they could enter and look at the flowers in living pictures.

The gardeners in Japan make all sorts of wonderful stories and pictures with the chrysanthemums.

Here you will see a ship filled with gods and goddesses. There you will be astonished at the sight of a sail set to carry a junk over a chrysanthemum sea. Somewhere else you will come upon an open umbrella, a flag, a demon or a dragon; there is no end to the quaint fancies!

It is hard to understand how these pictures can be made until one learns that the gardeners have been at the business for several generations. They say that, to have a thing well done, your children and grandchildren must do it after you.

To make the chrysanthemum pictures, they tie the branches of the plants, and even the tiny flowers, to slender bamboo sticks; there is also a delicate frame of copper wire through which the flowers are sometimes drawn, and sometimes the gardeners use light bamboo figures of boats and dragons and gods.

The faces of the people in the flower pictures are paper or plaster masks. It would really be too much to ask the gardeners to make chrysanthemum

expressions. Nowhere outside of Japan will you find such curious pictures!

It was very late when Umé and her mother reached home again. Now the houses on both sides of the streets were hung with festoons of flags and lanterns on each of which was the round red sun of Japan.

The wide-opened shutters showed brightly lighted rooms in which the families were entertaining friends or having tea and cakes; they sat on the floors, which were covered with scarlet blankets in honor of the Emperor.

In the shops were tempting displays of fruits, fish and toys, and in the distance Umé could see the fireworks which were being set off in the palace grounds.

Tara and his father were already at home, but the boy was far too excited over the grand review of the Emperor's troops to listen to anything his sister had to tell.

"He is an honorably wonderful man, our most illustrious Emperor," said Tara. "My admirable father told me that he never stood upon his own feet until he was sixteen years old."

"I think that is not so honorably wonderful," said Umé stoutly. But when she took both of her own feet up at the same time, to try how it could be done, she found herself suddenly upon the floor.

"Did he walk upon his august head?" she demanded.

"Umé," said her mother, "speak not so disrespectfully of the Son of Heaven!"

But Tara explained: "He was carried about all the time, and shown only to very noble people once in a while. But when he became a man, he said it should all be different. And he put down all the old nobility that had kept him so honorably helpless, and then he made everything as it is today in Japan.

"Under the old rule, no one was allowed to leave the country and we knew no other people except the Chinese. Now we know the whole world and can teach the other nations many things."

Just then old Maru entered the room with tea and cakes. The cakes looked exactly like maple leaves. There were also candies made to look like autumn grasses and chrysanthemums.

Umé clapped her hands and danced about the room.

"May the Emperor live forever!" she sang; and Tara wheeled and marched like a soldier, shouting, "May Japan never be conquered!"

CHAPTER XIV

DARUMA SAMA

Among the stories which O Ba San told to Umé and her brother was one about Daruma Sama.

Daruma Sama was a Japanese saint who lived many, many years ago. It was his great desire to cross the sea on a leaf, but in order to do so it was first necessary for him to pray long and sincerely to the gods.

He knelt in prayer for many years, and at last his feet and legs fell from his body because they had been idle so long a time.

In all the toy-shops there are images of this saint with his large head and big round body which has no trouble in sitting still.

The Japanese children make their snow men in the image of Daruma Sama. They give him a charcoal ball for each eye and a streak of charcoal for his nose and mouth, and then they have a fine snow man.

It was almost the end of the year before Tara had an opportunity to make a Daruma. In Tokio snow rarely covers the ground for more than

twenty-four hours at a time, and sometimes there is a winter with almost no snow at all.

But one evening, only two days before the New Year Festival, the air was so chilly that the veranda shutters were all tightly closed and the shoji drawn together, while the family sat around the fireplace.

Lift up the square of matting in the middle of a Japanese living-room and you will find, sunk in the floor, a stone-lined bowl a few inches deep. This is the fireplace. When the day is cold the maid puts a shovelful of live coals into this bowl, places a wooden frame about a foot high over it, and covers all with a quilt. Then the cold ones may sit around the fire on the floor, draw the quilt over their knees and into their laps, and soon become perfectly warm.

Tara and Umé had heard many a delightful story as they sat snuggled under the warm quilt on winter evenings.

On this evening their father said suddenly, "The white snow-flakes will fall to-night and cover the earth as the white plum blossoms cover the trees."

Tara sprang from under the quilt and ran to open the shutters so that he might see for himself how the weather looked outside.

He was so eager that his fingers slipped and pushed a hole through the paper covering of the shoji. His mother looked sadly at the torn place.

"It was only this morning," she said, "that I put new papers on the shoji to be in readiness for the New Year. Baby Yuki's fingers had made many holes in the paper walls."

In a moment Tara ran back into the warm room. "It is faithfully true," he cried. "Even now white flakes are falling."

In the morning it was as if they had moved to a different world. The snow made the garden, with its trees and pond and bridge, look like fairyland.

"I will go to the garden-house for my stilts," said Tara, "then I can walk about in the snow on my heron-legs as the white herons walk in the mud of the rice-fields."

Stilts are made of bamboo sticks, and are called "heron-legs," after the long-legged snowy herons that strut about in the wet fields. Wooden clogs will lift their wearers out of the mud of the streets in bad weather; but the boys are always glad of an excuse to get out their stilts. They walk on them so much that they become expert in their use and can run and even play games on them.

Umé looked rather sadly at the new white world outside.

"The snow has come too soon," she said.

"Why?" asked Tara.

"Because I have no time for play," answered Umé. "There are gifts to finish, and I must also

help the honorable mother to make all clean and sweet for the New Year."

"Let the gifts honorably wait until the hour of the horse," said Tara, "so that you may play with us this morning in the garden."

But Umé went dutifully to her sewing. She was making a bundle handkerchief for Tei out of a piece of bright colored crêpe with her family crest embroidered on it.

After that was finished she made a lucky-bag to hang on the New Year's arch at the house door.

The lucky-bag was made of a square of Japanese paper. Into it Umé put several things which are known to bring good luck — a few chestnuts, a bit of dried fish, and a dried plum. She tied them up in the paper with a red and white paper string, and put the bag away until the arch should be ready.

New Year's Day is the most important time in the whole year in Japan. It is the day when all the people, from the highest to the lowest, have a holiday. For days, and even weeks, preparations are made to celebrate the festival with proper ceremony. Never are the streets of the cities and towns so filled with gayly dressed crowds of people hurrying here and there, buying and selling, as during the last days of the dying year.

Every house is thoroughly cleaned from roof to veranda, the shoji are covered with fresh papers,

new kimonos and sashes are made, new hairpins purchased, new mats are laid on the floors and the old ones are burned.

On the last day of the old year every room is dusted with the feathery leaves of a green branch of bamboo. Then the gateway is decorated with a beautiful arch, one of the Japanese symbols of health, happiness and prosperity.

On each side of the gateway two holes are dug in which are planted small pine trees. On the left is the tree which represents the father, on the right is the mother-pine. Beside these are set the graceful stems of the bamboo, the green leaves towering above the low roof and rustling in the wind. From one bamboo stalk to the other is hung a thick rope of rice-straw, beautifully plaited and knotted, to give a blessing to the household and keep out all evil spirits.

From this rope hang yellow oranges, and scarlet lobsters which with their crooked bodies signify long life and an old age bent with years. There are also fern leaves, a branch of camellia, a piece of seaweed, a lucky-bag, flags, and strips of white paper which are supposed to be images of men offering themselves to the gods.

Everything about the pine-tree arch has a meaning, and signifies wishes for health, strength, happiness, obedience, honor and a long life.

Of course there must be a decoration inside the house as well. Tara and Umé went to the shops with their father to choose one for the alcove room, after the Daruma Sama was made and Umé's sewing finished.

The children chose a harvest ship, a junk about two feet long, made of straw with twigs of pine and bamboo in the bow and stern. It was loaded with many bales of make-believe merchandise in which were little gifts, and was sprinkled with gold-dust to make it look bright. There was a red sun on one side of the boat and the sails were of scarlet paper.

On the way home they passed a shop where foreign shoes were offered for sale, and where some one at that moment was buying a pair of red shoes for a little girl about as old as Umé.

Umé held her father still to watch the child try them on her little feet, and they certainly made the feet look very pretty.

Umé's father smiled at the look in his daughter's eyes, but he soon drew her away to a toy-shop out of sight of the little red shoes. There they bought a ball for Baby Yuki and gifts for the mother and grandmother, going home only when they could carry nothing more.

If ever there is a time and place when enticing red shoes can be forgotten, it is New Year's time

among the shops in Japan. No one ever thinks of staying indoors then, else he would miss the gayest, liveliest, brightest time of the whole year.

The shop-keepers have to fill their shelves with great quantities of new things to match the New Year; there are new games, new kimonos, new clogs, new toys for sale everywhere, and even the story-tellers brighten up their old stories to make them seem like new.

That last day before the New Year was a very busy one in the Utsuki household. There were gifts to be put into dainty packages, the pine-tree arch to be decorated, the last stitches to be taken in the new kimonos, and the last bills to be paid — even the smallest one that might possibly have been overlooked.

There is a beautiful custom in Japan of beginning the year without a debt. Every bill is paid and no one owes a single sen when the old year dies and the new year dawns.

When at last Umé said her honorable good-night to her father and mother and went to her wooden pillow she was very tired.

As she crept under the warm coverlet she whispered drowsily, "May Benten Sama, or Kwannon, or one of the illustrious goddesses give me what I have prayed for so long." Then she fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XV

NEW YEAR'S DAY

"So many honorable sounds!" murmured Umé drowsily, and she listened for a moment without opening her eyes.

It was New Year's morning, so early that the sun was only just rising.

Umé could hear the clapping of many hands outside the house. "I, myself, meant to welcome the illustrious sun with the hand-joy," she said to herself, and sprang from her bed with wide-open eyes.

It took but a moment to slip into a thick kimono and push open the shoji. Someone had already opened the wooden shutters and Umé reached the corner of the street in time to see the round red sun send his first beams over the snow-covered roofs.

She clapped her hands joyously and bowed a welcoming "Ohayo" to the great ball of light. "Now I shall surely begin the year with good luck!" she said to herself as she slipped back into the house.

She closed the shoji and cuddled again between the soft quilts for warmth. Then it occurred to

her to wonder why she had not seen her mother, who always rose very early, among the group that was greeting the New Year sun.

The air was filled with the sound of joy bells which were ringing from all the temples. One hundred and eight strokes must they ring, twelve times nine, to keep all evil spirits away from the city in this new year.

But there were other sounds which came from within the house. Was it,—yes, it surely was the sound of a little new baby's cry.

Again Umé was out of bed and pattering across the room to open her shoji. Her father was standing before the alcove in the honorable guest room, and he read the question in her face before Umé could ask it.

"Yes," he said, "a new son has come to our unworthy house on this morning of the New Year."

Umé bowed her forehead to the floor, "Omedeto, O Chichi San," she said. "I am most respectfully happy. May I go to see him and bid him honorable welcome?"

"After the breakfast is faithfully eaten, it may perhaps be permitted," answered her father. Then he asked, "Was there not some gift you have asked from the gods in the year that has passed?"

"I have asked many times for a gift, but neither the gods nor the goddesses have yet given it to me."

"Have you ever asked the generous mother for it?"

"No, O Chichi San."

"Why have you not asked your insignificant father?"

"O Chichi San, I feared you would not permit me to have what I most wished."

Her father looked at her gravely and took a package from his kimono sleeve. He gave it to Umé, saying as he did so, "Your thoughtful mother asked me to buy this in the foreign shop and give it to you this morning."

The package was tied with red and white paper string. Umé took it in both hands, raised it to her forehead, bowed her thanks, and opened it. Inside the package was a pair of red shoes with black heels!

"O Chichi San, how worthily beautiful!" and Umé danced about the room, clasping the pretty things to her heart. "This is what I have asked of Benten Sama and Kwannon and of the other goddesses," she said with shining eyes.

Then she stood still and said wonderingly, "But I did not ask for a baby brother, although he was more to be desired."

"Your mother gives both the shoes and the baby brother to you," said her father.

"May I not go to her and give her many thanks truly?" asked Umé.

"Your mother is ill," said her father. "It may be that she will never speak to us again."

"Oh, no!" cried Umé in great distress. She looked at the little red shoes and suddenly dropped them to the floor.

"Benten Sama may have them, if she will only make my honorable mother well," she said.

The pretty things which she had dreamed of, and longed for, and begged of all the gods, suddenly became of no value to her except as an offering to save her mother's life.

She knelt at her father's feet and bowed her head to the floor. "Have I your noble permission to go to Asakusa Temple and pray to the good Kwannon that my mother may become well?" she asked.

"Yes," her father answered, "and it may be that a gift of that which you most treasure will be pleasing to the Goddess of Mercy."

Umé looked down at the little red shoes, gathered them up and tucked them into her kimono sleeve; then ran to ask old Maru to go with her to the temple.

The little girl had never before been to the temple on so sad an errand.

"See," said old Maru as the jinrikisha-man took up his shafts, "the gate-pine-tree is giving you an honorable message."

Umé looked back as the old nurse continued,

"When autumn winds blow the leaves from the other trees and leave them sad and cheerless, the pine holds its needles more green and vigorous than ever. We should be like the pine, brave to conquer our troubles when they come."

Umé tried to smile. "I will be obediently brave," she said.

Old Maru nodded approvingly. "As the pine stands for strength and the bamboo for uprightness, so the fern means hope and the seaweed good fortune."

Umé began to be a little cheerful. "I dreamed of Fujiyama, the sacred, in the night," she said, "that means great happiness."

"Yes," said old Maru comfortably, "everything points to good fortune this moring. Let us hope that the merciful goddess will be gracious to grant our prayer."

The sound of the temple bells still filled the air. Everywhere the streets and houses were decorated with paper lanterns and flags and banners, each one white with a round red sun. The lanterns were strung in rows across the streets and on the houses from the low eaves to the veranda posts. At the temple they hung at every possible point from roof to steps.

Umé and Maru went reverently through all the ceremory of washing the hands and mouth, ringing

the bell, dropping the offering of coins in the box and buying the rice-cakes. They left their clogs at the entrance among several other pairs, for many sad hearts had come to the temple with petitions on this early morning of the New Year.

When Umé left the temple the pretty red shoes were lying at the feet of the Goddess Kwannon, and the child's face looked full of hope.

As they sat in the jinrikisha old Maru said, "One can never do too much for the honorable mother." Then she added proudly, "No other nation in the world can show such examples of filial love as Japan."

"What do you mean?" asked Umé, who could listen to a story now that her heart was lightened of its fear.

"I mean the example of the four and twenty paragons," replied the nurse. "The gods never gave me a son. If they had I should have prayed that he might be like the paragon who, when he himself was very old, became a baby so that his parents might not realize how old they had grown."

"But I thought we Japanese liked to become very old," said Umé, puzzled. "I always say 'Ohayo, old woman,' to the batter-cake woman at the corner, and she is gratefully pleased."

"That is true. But the paragon showed his filial

affection by acting as a baby," persisted old Maru. "It was a noble thing to do."

"How many paragons were there?" asked Umé.

"Four and twenty," replied the old woman.

"Was one of them a little girl, and did she give up her red shoes?" asked Umé.

Old Maru looked doubtful. "It was a long time ago," she said. "I think no red shoes had been made in the world at that time."

But Umé was again thinking of her mother. "Tell the jinrikisha-man to go faster," she urged.

The man was trotting along, looking at every pine-tree arch. The treeless streets, as far as one could see, were a bower of pine and bamboo. Little children ran into the road, dressed in new kimonos and sashes. Boys were making images of Daruma Sama in the snow, messengers were bearing gifts from one house to another, and men dressed in uniform were already going to pay their respects to their beloved Emperor.

Some of the streets were almost impassable because of the number of beautifully dressed girls who were playing battledore and shuttlecock. The air was full of the bright fluttering toys as they were struck from one player to the other, and the silver world was a very merry place as Umé rode swiftly toward her home.

"If only the honorable mother is augustly well,

and the new baby strong," she said wistfully, "our humble household might be the gayest of them all."

As they drew near to their own gateway, Umé clapped her hands. Tara and his father were in the garden and an enormous kite was just rising into the air. It was decorated with a great red sun and a bright red carp, and had a long tail of red and blue papers flying behind it. Higher and higher it rose, the tail turning and twisting in the wind.

"I know my honorable mother is better!" cried Umé, beside herself with joy.

"The chestnuts did not go into the lucky-bag for nothing," said old Maru contentedly. "I knew they would bring an answer to our prayer."

But Umé did not hear her. She left the old woman picking her way carefully along the snowy stepping-stones while she flew to her father.

"Is my admirable mother better?" she asked breathlessly.

"Yes," answered her father. "O Doctor San says she will soon be well."

"It is because the gracious Kwannon was pleased with the red shoes," said Umé softly.

PRONOUNCING VOCABULARY AND DICTIONARY

Ä sä′kŭ sä, a temple in Tokio.

Bā, grandmother.

Bĕn′tĕn Sä′mä, a goddess of love and good fortune.

chi chi (chē′chē), father.

chŏp′stĭcks, small sticks used in eating.

clŏgs, a wooden shoe worn to lift the feet out of the mud.

Cŏn fū′cius (shius), a celebrated Chinese philosopher.

Dä rŭ′mä Sä′mä, a Japanese god.

Ĕn ō shi′mä (shē), a small island on the east coast of Japan. Shima means island.

Fu ji ya ma (fū′jē yä′mä), an extinct volcano, the highest mountain of Japan. Yama means mountain.

gei sha (gā′shȧ), a dancing girl.

ge ta (gā′tȧ), wooden clogs.

gō, five.

gō′down, a fireproof building used as a storehouse.

hä′hä, mother.

i chi (ē′chē), one.

jĭn rĭk′ĭ shä, a two-wheeled carriage drawn by a man.

jŭn̲k, a flat-bottomed, sea-going sailing vessel.

Kä mä′kŭ rä, a small town on the east coast of Japan.

Ka mei do (kä mā′dō), a temple in Tokio.

ki mo no (kē mō′nō), a garment resembling a dressing-gown, worn by men, women, and children in Japan.

Kĭn tä′rō, a Japanese hero.

ki ri gi ri su (kē rē gē′rē sù), a singing insect.
kō, little.
kō′tō, a musical instrument somewhat like a harp.
kō′tow, bow the forehead to the ground.
Kwän′nŏn, the goddess of mercy.
Mä′rù, round, a name sometimes given to girls.
ni (nē), two.
Nä rù hō′dō, an exclamation.
Ō, honorable, the Japanese honorific.
Ō Bā Sän, honorable Grandmother Mrs.
O hay o (ō hī′ō), "honorable early," good-morning.
o mé dé to (ō mā dā′tō), "honorable congratulation."
Ō yä′mä, a mountain near Yokohama.
rĭn, a coin, one tenth of a sen, one twentieth of a cent.
săn, three.
Sän, Mr., Mrs., or Miss; a title of respect.
sa ké (sä′kā), a liquor made from rice.
Sä′mä, Mr., Mrs., or Miss; a title of respect.
săm′ĭ sĕn, a musical instrument resembling a banjo.
sĕn, a coin worth one tenth of a yen, one half of a cent.
shi (shē), four.
sù′zu, an insect.
Sù gä wä′rä-nō-Mĭch ĭ zä′né (nā), a Japanese goddess.
ta bi (tä′bē), stockings, with a place for the big toe.
Tä′mä, jewel; often used as a girl's name.
Tä′rä, a boy's name.
Tei (tā), a girl's name.
To ki o (tō′kē ō), the capital of Japan.
U mé (ù mā′), plum blossom; often used as a girl's name.
Ut su ki (ùt sù′kē), a family name.
yĕn, a coin worth about fifty cents.

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